

**An investigation of the way in which  
school and community leadership  
processes influence the role of schools  
in rural community development**

**Susan Maree Johns, BEd (TCAE), BAdVocEd (Tas)**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education by Research  
University of Tasmania, June 2004

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## Acknowledgments

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I am indebted to my Supervisor, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, for her guidance and support in the preparation of this dissertation, and for her generosity of spirit over the course of this study. I would also like to thank my Research Supervisor, Professor Bill Mulford, for his advice and invaluable assistance, particularly in relation to the sections on educational leadership.

This study would not have been possible without the support of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation who funded the original research and who gave me permission to use their data. It would also not have been possible without the willing cooperation and generous assistance of the principals, staff, students, parents and community members from the five sites that participated in the study.

To those who assisted in data collection, transcription, coding and input, I express my gratitude. To Ms Libby Prescott, in particular, thank you for your companionship and invaluable assistance during those very busy, and sometimes stressful, times.

Thanks also to my colleagues, Ms Rosa McManamey and Mr Tony Smith, for acting as a sounding board, and for offering much-needed moral and practical support along the way.

A special thank you to my son Matthew, who provided the original graphics in Chapters 4 and 5. To my husband Ron, and other children Luke and Madeleine, thank you for your love and support and for putting up with me and making allowances when things became tough.

One final acknowledgment: to my parents, thank you for always being there and believing in me.

Whilst there is nothing new about rural school–community linkages, the growth of school–community partnerships in recent years represents a new phase in this symbiotic relationship: one that is formalised, and supported by government at the policy level. Partnerships are based on a collective, rather than individual or ‘hero leader,’ view of leadership, and are designed to facilitate collective learning and problem solving. They facilitate the integration of school and community resources, and are designed primarily to enhance student outcomes. School–community partnerships also facilitate lifelong learning, but only passing attention has been paid to their impact on the broader capacity-building, or social capital, outcomes in rural communities.

Using a qualitative approach, and a case study strategy of inquiry, this study explores the process of building school–community partnerships, from the perspective of those involved in partnership development. Five effective school–community partnerships were selected, using a purposive sampling strategy. Data were collected from multiple sources, including semi-structured interviews, researcher observation, written documentation, and community perception maps, and were used in the preparation of case studies of five different rural school–community partnerships. Extensive cross-case analysis was then undertaken to enhance transferability of the findings.

The study found that effective partnerships are complex and long-term in nature. Viewing partnership development as a five-stage process through which social capital is built and used, it is the fourth stage, critical reflection, that is the key to partnership sustainability. This stage is not adequately recognised in research into partnership development. At this stage partnership identity is affirmed as successes are recognised and celebrated, and the decision is taken to continue the partnership learning cycle. Thus, the social capital built over the earlier stages of partnership development is marshalled at the critical reflection stage, to facilitate further collaborative action.

Specific leadership roles are linked to the five-stage partnership development process. These roles are weighted towards facilitating the partnership (building social capital amongst partners). Roles are not based on formal leadership positions, and are shared amongst school and community members. Those who undertake specific leadership roles have relevant skills, knowledge and attributes, as well as a high level of commitment to the partnership. This is not to deny the critical role of formal school leaders (principals). They are keyholders to partnership and rural

community development, with the ability to unlock access to social capital within and beyond the school and community.

If the community-wide benefits of school–community partnerships are to be maximised, there needs to be greater policy flexibility in terms of time and financial resources, to take into account the sequential and long-term nature of partnership development. Because partnerships require extensive resources, support, and commitment from both school and community, the study concludes with the call for greater integration between rural community development policy and rural education policy. This will facilitate sharing of resources and leadership training opportunities, as well as legitimise and more fully support the role of rural schools in community development.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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### About the study

This study into the community development role of rural schools, and the leadership processes that facilitate this, derives from research conducted in 1999–2001 funded by the Australian Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC). The original study, which was project managed by the writer, involved a five-member project team from the University of Tasmania. The project team provided advice on site selection and development of survey instruments, collected data, undertook data interpretation and write up in the form of case studies, and were involved in some cross-site analysis in relation to stages of the partnership development process and influencing factors.

In the role of project manager, the writer, in collaboration with team members, was responsible for identifying and selecting study sites and study participants; convening a project Reference Group comprising experts in rural education; developing the survey instruments; coordinating data collection; developing the coding framework; coding and entering data; developing and presenting preliminary findings at community meetings, and coordinating, and writing approximately 75% of, the final RIRDC report. The final report was published in 2002. Titled *More Than an Education: Leadership for rural school–community partnerships* (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b), the report is available electronically at <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/fullreports/hcc.html>.

With the permission of the funding body, the current study utilises the data collected for the RIRDC study, which was written up in the form of five case studies. It builds on the original RIRDC project, by undertaking additional, in depth, cross-case analysis, focusing specifically on leadership processes that link the development and sustainability of rural school–community partnerships to capacity building in rural communities. Specifically, the writer investigated in depth, leadership processes and roles, and the mediating effects of policy and other factors on leadership for school–community partnerships. As a result, the current study contributes significant new knowledge and understanding in relation to leadership for school–community partnerships, and the importance of this process to rural community development.

All of the material contained in this dissertation is the original work of the writer, except where otherwise indicated. Certain sections were originally produced by the writer for inclusion in the final report to RIRDC. Co-authors of the final report, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Professor Bill Mulford,

and Ms Libby Prescott, all from the University of Tasmania, and Professor Ian Falk from the Northern Territory University, have provided written attestations (see Appendix A) that all the material contained in the dissertation is the original work of the writer, except where otherwise indicated. Footnotes to each chapter clearly indicate the proportion of new material and material originally produced for the RIRDC final report.<sup>1</sup>

## **Background to the research**

### **Schools and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The knowledge-based economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has at its core, the development of human capacity through a process of continuous learning. The imperative for continuous or lifelong learning derives from rapidly-changing social and economic forces, including the effects of globalisation, the role of information and communication technologies in shrinking the world, continued decentralisation and devolution of government department responsibilities, and changes in community power structures to reflect the diversity of the baby boomer generation (Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997). Schools and other learning facilities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century also need to continuously learn if they are to remain relevant, and to be able to equip individuals and their communities to contribute to, and participate in, the knowledge-based economy.

Earlier models of schools as self contained, single purpose enclaves (Beare 2002) providing instruction to young people, are being replaced by more flexible models that locate schools as centres of inquiry, focusing on learning how to learn, and acting as brokers to connect learners to the multiple sources of learning available within the community. In short, we are seeing a progression towards Beare's (2001) vision of the borderless school, through the development of schools as learning communities (see, for example, New South Wales Department of School Education 1995; Beare 2002). Derived from Peter Senge's (1990) seminal work on the symbiotic link between personal and organisational learning, learning communities describe a web of learning networks and partnerships, both face-to-face and virtual (Senge 1990; Paloff & Pratt 2001; Beare 2002). It is the process of developing these networks and partnerships that forms the basis of the current study.

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<sup>1</sup> All material in this chapter is new and was written by Susan Johns for this dissertation. The only exception is the section on the broader policy context of education partnerships in Australia, which is based on material written by Susan Johns for inclusion in Chapter 2 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Co-authors of the original report, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Professor Bill Mulford, and Ms Libby Prescott, all from the University of Tasmania, and Professor Ian Falk from the Northern Territory University, attest to the fact that Susan Johns is the sole author of all material contained in this chapter.

## **The broader policy context of education partnerships in Australia**

Within Australia, the partnership approach is very much part of the agenda of Commonwealth and State governments, in relation to the provision of education in both the school and vocational education and training sectors. The increasing focus on education partnerships is set within the context of an increasing recognition by governments and educators of the educational, social and economic benefits to be gained from fostering the development of school–community partnerships (Boyd 1999). This is illustrated by the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*, representing an agreement by all Australian States/Territories and the Commonwealth government to ‘further strengthening schools as learning communities where teachers, students and their families work in partnership with business, industry and the wider community’ (MCEETYA 1999, p. 2). Building on this declaration, other key Commonwealth and State bodies involved in the provision and funding of education and training, have developed policies to support and strengthen school–community partnerships. Examples include *Learning Together* (Department of Education Tasmania 2001), *Queensland State Education 2010* (Education Queensland 2000), and *Bright Futures for Young Australians: Community partnerships for the future of successful transitions* (Australian Student Traineeship Foundation 1999, now known as the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation).

Accountability policies in education have also had some influence on partnership development within Australia. The introduction by State and Territory departments of education of school-based management (or local school management) over the past decade or so (Schneyder 2002), has been partly responsible for the development of school councils, which represent a significant partnership between the school and community. Community in this sense includes parents and wider community members, specifically representatives from key institutions such as local government and health. This form of partnership is supported by State/Territory department of education legislation and policy (represented in Tasmania, for example, by the *Education Act 1994* and the *Parent Participation Policy* also developed in 1994; and represented in other States/Territories by equivalent or similar legislation and policy). Councils are charged with school governance, requiring members to work together closely on the preparation of a school charter that represents the goals and priorities of the school, in line with the expectations of the school community.

One of the most rapidly growing areas of school–community partnerships in Australia is related to the growth of vocational education and training programs in secondary and senior secondary

schools (known as VET in schools<sup>2</sup> programs), particularly since 1997. Such programs aim to facilitate school to work transition for young people, and typically involve employers in providing work placements for students. They are also likely to include a range of school and wider community stakeholders, such as industry and local government representatives, on the partnership management committee. The role of the committee is to ensure consistency between, and relevance and quality of, the school and workplace components of the program. Whilst the growth of VET in schools programs has been strong throughout Australia, of particular importance is the fact that rural students are more likely than their urban counterparts to participate in such programs (Fullarton 2001; Malley, Ainley & Robinson 2001), thus driving the formation and expansion of school–community partnerships in rural areas. Strong and ongoing government support for VET in schools programs is articulated in the *New Framework for Vocational Education in Schools* (MCEETYA 2001b). This Framework is a significant advance in that it represents a national approach ‘driven by Commonwealth policy and funding initiatives’ (Malley, Keating, Robinson & Hawke 2001, p. 20), indicating a high level of government commitment to VET in schools partnerships.

### **Rural and remote education in Australia: Lagging behind or leading the way?**

Nowhere within Australia is the move towards the establishment of learning partnerships between school and community more vital than in rural and remote areas. Rural education has, for some time, been identified as a priority by Commonwealth and State governments, and by the National Farmers’ Federation. This focus is illustrated by various inquiries, reviews, policy documents and Commonwealth and State government initiatives, culminating in the *National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education* undertaken by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2000a and b). The Inquiry was a driving force in facilitating a partnership approach to addressing the disadvantages faced by rural and remote students in Australia. Key findings included identification of a number of disadvantages experienced by rural and remote students compared with their urban counterparts, in relation to the availability, delivery and outcomes of educational programs. Indigenous students were identified as a sub-set of rural and remote students experiencing particular disadvantage, not only because of access and equity issues, but also because of a range of other issues relating to cultural differences, including differences in attitudes towards education, culturally inappropriate curricula, and the inflexibility of school structures and calendars to accommodate Indigenous traditions and cultural beliefs.

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<sup>2</sup> In Australia, vocational education and training programs offered by secondary schools are known by the generic term ‘VET in schools’. For consistency, the term VET in schools will be used throughout this study to refer to school vocational education and training programs in Australia and overseas.

One of the recommendations from the *National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education* was 'that education and training providers develop policies and funding formulas which encourage local and regional sharing of facilities and resources ...' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission 2000b, p. 38). On the recommendation of the Inquiry, a *National Framework for Rural and Remote Education* (MCEETYA 2001a) was developed. The Framework advocated a whole-of-community approach to rural and remote education, asserting that 'the needs of rural and remote students should be met through local commitment and ownership as well as through predictable and sustained government funded initiatives' (p. 6). With respect to the needs of Indigenous students in particular, at a meeting of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in March 2000, State/Territory and Commonwealth ministers of education devised and expressed their support for a *National Statement of Principles and Standards for More Culturally Inclusive Schooling in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (MCEETYA 2000a), and *A Model of More Culturally Inclusive and Educationally Effective Schools* (MCEETYA 2000b). At the heart of both documents was the need to build public confidence in education by encouraging partnerships between the school and Indigenous parents and caregivers. In addition, the *Model of More Culturally Inclusive and Educationally Effective Schools* (2000b) provided explicit guidelines regarding the roles of the school and community, in terms of leadership, environment, organisation, professional development and curriculum, in fostering these partnerships.

Whilst there is nothing new in rural and remote schools having close linkages with their communities, either within Australia or overseas, the key focus of the *National Framework for Rural and Remote Education*, the *National Statement of Principles and Standards for More Culturally Inclusive Schooling in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and the *Model of More Culturally Inclusive and Educationally Effective Schools*, was the same: formalisation and support for school–community partnerships at a policy level. Specifically, these documents sought to recognise and support collaborations between school and community that reflected a long-term commitment on the part of both parties to achieving a common goal—education of their young people. The central message of each document was the need to recognise and support the reciprocal and interdependent relationship between school and community. This was an important step forward, given that policy is the basis on which formal collaborations are able to sustain support over time (Miller 1995), and it is these formal collaborations, supported by policy, in which the current study is particularly interested.

Of course, there was already some recognition of the importance of the relationship between rural schools and their communities well before the *National Inquiry into Rural and Remote*

*Education*, as reflected in a number of Commonwealth government initiatives, including the Country Area Program (CAP) introduced in 1982, and the Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness (ASSPA) program introduced in 1990. Known in some states as Priority Country Area Program (PCAP), the Country Area Program provides funding to support, amongst other things, shared activities between eligible rural schools or clusters of schools and their communities, in order to facilitate equity with urban students in terms of educational access, participation rates, and outcomes. The Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness (ASSPA) program provides funding for initiatives that will facilitate greater involvement of Indigenous students, parents and communities in the education process. In schools with a mixed Indigenous and non Indigenous population, this funding can be, and is, used to develop initiatives that will benefit all students and parents.

Some rural schools and communities have utilised funding from these initiatives in innovative ways, to help build the capacity of students as well as the wider community. In Queensland, for example, there are instances of a number of schools within a cluster or similar geographical area pooling their PCAP and ASSPA funding, and also seeking financial support from each school's Parents and Citizens (P & C) group, to offer a variety of student and parent development sessions, that they would not be able to fund on their own. Several of these PCAP school clusters have also formed Commonwealth government-funded partnerships with a regional University to trial and implement the School at the Centre project (Northern Priority Country Area Program and Rural Education Research and Development Centre 2001). Originally a North American initiative, the School at the Centre project is designed to facilitate the role of the school in rural community renewal. The resourcefulness of these rural communities in forming collaborations or partnerships both within and beyond their communities, and their vision of their schools as vital players in their communities' development, sets the scene for the current study.

### **Rural schools and community renewal: The Australian context**

Given that education policy within Australia facilitates and supports school–community partnerships, and locates them at the centre of the school's core activities, rather than as an adjunct to those activities, it is not difficult to see the potential for such partnerships in terms of rural community renewal. As noted earlier, the current study is set within the broader context of rapidly changing social and economic forces, which are impacting on rural and remote communities, as well as urban centres. These forces are coupled with the need to adapt to and manage change in relation to a raft of other issues specific to rural Australia, including shrinking education, health, communications, banking and other services; declining population; unemployment; lower rates of post school educational participation, and issues relating to

agricultural over production, environmental degradation and conflicts over resource use and land management (see, for example, Harrison 1997; Lamb, Long & Malley 1998; Lamb & Rumberger 1999; Guenther 1999; McSwan & Barman-Jenssen 1999; Wahlquist 1999).

As Falk (2001) argues, in the Foreword to *Learning to Manage Change: Developing regional communities for a local–global millennium*, although some believe that rural decline is inevitable, others believe that ‘something can—and should—be done, and that working towards a society that values lifelong learning is our best chance of achieving a vibrant and sustainable rural Australia’. Lifelong learning includes informal, non formal and formal learning. The focus on lifelong learning as central to rural community renewal, indicates the need for a bottom-up or endogenous approach to community development (Hugonnier 1999; Ray 1999), and calls for new models of leadership that are regional and collaborative in nature, as opposed to the national and adversarial models that were popular in the past, and that were strongly influenced by political leaders (Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997). As Ray notes: ‘It seems reasonable to claim that local collectivity/solidarity ... is a necessary basis for endogenous development to succeed within the wider context of globalisation’ (p. 527). Specifically, collaborative leadership through partnerships or coalitions, if ‘properly designed and supported, could create the multifaceted and comprehensive community development strategy necessary for member organizations to adequately develop their own capacity ...’ (Chavis 1995, p. 237). The significance of partnerships being properly designed and supported cannot be emphasised enough, and is a central theme of the current study.

Sustainable rural communities, it is argued, are those that generate their ‘own sustainable socioeconomic activity through local responses to local conditions, but with global benchmarks’ (CRLRA 2000, p. 3). There is now a growing body of research (see, for example, Putnam 1993; CRLRA 2000, 2001; OECD 2001a) that links social, economic and environmental wellbeing within communities to their level of community social capital. Put simply, social capital is the ‘trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions’ (Putnam 1993, p. 167), and is built as individuals and groups learn together. It is argued that the process of learning together through school–community partnerships builds community capacity, or social capital (Falk 2001; OECD 2001a and b). For schools that have strong partnerships with their communities, this learning is facilitated by principals who have a broad view of education that extends well beyond the classroom and the students within the school. That is, they are proponents of lifelong learning, and they take the role of leading learner (New South Wales Department of School Education 1995; Gorinski & Davey 2000). In this way, rural



schools as learning communities, supported at the policy level, can be seen as critical to community renewal and sustainability.

As Longworth (1999) and OECD (2001a) note, the school is a key player in the process of community renewal in two ways: by providing a focus for community activity, and by representing one component of community capacity. Lane and Dorfman (1997, p. 12) describe the rural school's role as follows:

The school is an important element of sustainable community renewal, and, as such, needs to be a member of a complex partnership structure as well as an equal participant in the collaborative process.

However, there is greater potential for rural schools to do even more than provide a focus for community activity and represent one component of community capacity. In partnership with their communities, they have the potential to build community capacity more broadly, by bringing together individuals and groups from diverse community sectors in ways perhaps never before considered, thus facilitating new collaborations that extend well beyond the school and well beyond the life of the original partnership. The current study is interested in the nexus between the school as a learning community in which students, staff, parents and other community members learn how to learn together, and the school as a critical player in the development of a much larger learning community or learning city (Ralph 2000; Longworth 1999, 2002; Beare 2002). The term learning city is used to refer to an explicitly designed geographical entity or place, such as a village, city or region, that facilitates large scale and cooperative learning. Learning cities are comprised of a number of partnerships, involving business and industry, educational institutions, and local government, amongst others, with the school playing an integral role (Longworth 2002).

In an age in which 'brokers' play an increasingly important role in helping individuals and groups to deal with the complexities of modern life (for example, insurance brokers, finance brokers, education and training brokers), rural schools increasingly act as brokers to facilitate and support a variety of local collaborations. They are doing on a regular basis the sorts of things that Wilkinson and Applebee (1998) and Taylor (2000) identify as the role of community development brokers or mediators: facilitating the exchange of knowledge and building networks across boundaries; encouraging a community-based audit that focuses on community needs as well as the resources and interests of all stakeholders, and facilitating joint learning. This role links with recent literature (Beare 2002) that identifies an expanded role for schools in the knowledge economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century—that of learning enterprise brokers.

## **Rationale for the study**

The current study and the original study funded by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, form part of the broader research agenda of the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia (CRLRA), with whom the writer has been associated for several years. The CRLRA research agenda focuses on the link between learning partnerships and rural community social, economic and environmental wellbeing, with a specific focus on vocational education and training (VET) partnerships. With its focus on rural schools rather than VET providers, the current study complements and builds upon the suite of CRLRA projects dedicated to researching different approaches to community development in rural Australia.

This study is timely, given the growing emphasis within Australia and overseas, on developing education partnerships between schools and a variety of other partners including parents, business and industry, and other government departments and services. It is particularly timely because, despite government rhetoric and policy support, we do not have sufficient detailed knowledge of the leadership processes required for school–community partnership development. Much of the literature tends to focus on justifying the need for partnerships or on partnership outcomes, but there is scant information about how to develop effective partnerships, assuming people will be able to ‘work it out’ for themselves. Clearly, some partnerships are successful at working it out and others are not, although we hear less about the latter.

At a conference on school and community partnerships, the following comment resonated with many: ‘Partnerships—easy to say, but not so easy to do’ (Shimeld 2001b). In fact, partnerships ‘are difficult enough to successfully maintain when diverse groups have a tangible immediate goal [but] when the goals ... become more complex and distant, they can easily become tumultuous and/or inactive’ (Chavis 1995, p. 236). In an age of ‘quick fix’ solutions, the development of effective and lasting partnerships is something of an anathema, because by their very nature they are time consuming and fraught with the frustrations and complexities inherent in any group characterised by diversity rather than homogeneity. Certainly the current study does not lay claim to a ‘one size fits all’ framework for partnership development, nor does it suggest partnership development is easy. What it does is break down the partnership development process into a series of stages, match those stages with leadership roles, and identify the influence of context on partnership development. The focus on contextual factors is vital to our understanding of school–community partnerships, given that there is no such thing as a typical rural community or school, any more than we can identify a typical urban community or school. In this way it is hoped to highlight the difficulties in establishing and sustaining partnerships, and to provide a

range of strategies to assist practitioners and policymakers in the development of, and decisionmaking about, school–community partnerships.

Much has been written about the problems and disadvantages faced by schools and communities that make up rural and regional Australia, as highlighted earlier in this chapter, and these issues should not be downplayed. However, there is a tendency to overlook the innovations that quite often stem from adversity in rural communities. The earlier section titled ‘Rural and remote education in Australia: Lagging behind or leading the way?’ alludes to this. As Shimeld (2001a) notes, in an age in which individuals, groups, schools and other organisations are all being asked to do more, but with fewer resources, partnerships may be seen as ‘empower[ing] and extend[ing] the effectiveness of groups that would otherwise remain overlooked and, to a certain extent, disenfranchised’ (p. 2). This study is therefore as much a celebration of rural innovation and resourcefulness in terms of school–community partnerships, as it is a call for practitioners and policymakers to recognise and make provision for the particular difficulties and constraints faced by rural schools and communities as they attempt to develop mutually beneficial partnerships.

## Objectives and research questions

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the current study isolates and builds on one of the three areas examined in the original study funded by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. The area is leadership for school–community partnerships. The broad objective for the current study mirrors one of the objectives from the original research: to investigate ways in which the modes of leadership of school and community leaders influence the extent and nature of the school’s contribution to the community.

In order to explore this topic more fully, the current study has three research questions. The major question is:

- How do school and community leadership processes influence rural community development through school–community partnerships?

The two minor research questions are:

- What leadership roles are necessary for the development of school–community partnerships, and what leadership characteristics and attributes are associated with each of these roles?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This minor research question was not part of the original research design, but was added during the data analysis phase. Justification for including an additional research question is provided in Chapter 3.

- What other factors influence school–community partnerships and what are the impacts of this influence?

## **Organisation of the dissertation**

The dissertation comprises five chapters. Having provided a background and rationale for the study in this chapter, as well as outlining the research questions, Chapter 2 reviews and discusses relevant literature. It includes literature from a number of disciplines and sectors, including education, health, sociology, and community development. The chapter examines research in relation to the link between rural community development, social capital and schools; overviews leadership in the context of schools, organisations and communities, and examines the literature relating to partnerships and community development. Chapter 3 details the research methodology, including justification for a case study strategy of inquiry, sampling strategies, sources of data, data analysis techniques, and limitations of the study. In Chapter 4 an overview of the findings is presented, and readers are directed to the five case studies presented in Appendix G. The final chapter, Chapter 5, presents discussion on the process of developing school–community partnerships, and links this to the literature. It identifies areas for further research, and provides some concluding comments regarding the writer's contribution of new knowledge to the fields of educational leadership and community development.

## Chapter 2

# Literature review<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

This review is presented in three sections, each focusing on one of the three key concepts central to this study: namely, rural community development, leadership, and school–community partnerships. Section One presents theory and research in relation to rural community development, with a focus on social capital theory within Australia and overseas. It then reviews research in relation to the role of schools in rural community development. Relevant leadership theory and research is reviewed in Section Two, with a specific focus on school and community contexts. The section includes a review of literature on leadership through work teams and groups, then presents research on collaborative community leadership relevant to the study. The final section, Section Three, focuses specifically on the development and lifecycles of partnerships, including literature on school–community partnerships as well as broader partnerships in the context of rural community development. This material is reviewed and discussed in relation to the major research question, and the two minor research questions, for the study. The chapter concludes with some comments on the future direction of educational and community development leadership theory and research.

### Section One: Rural community development, social capital and schools

Policy discourse in a number of countries, including Australia, North America, the United Kingdom and the European Union, favours a change in rural support policy, from the sectoral approach of the past, with its focus on the traditional agriculture, mining, and manufacturing sectors, to a territorial approach, with a focus on rural communities themselves (Shortall & Shucksmith 2001; Stauber 2001). This change emphasises an endogenous or bottom-up approach to rural community development, which focuses on building community capacity through community-based initiatives and partnerships (Cavaye 1999; Shortall & Shucksmith 2001). Such

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter draws in part on a literature review written by Susan Johns, which formed Chapter 2 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b). Approximately 50% of the material in Section One, 20% in Section Two and 20% in Section Three is taken from the original literature review. The significant difference is that this chapter covers the key concepts of social capital, and school and organisational leadership, in much greater depth, while the major topic in Section Three on school–community leadership processes, is entirely new. Co-authors of the original report, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Professor Bill Mulford, and Ms Libby Prescott, all from the University of Tasmania, and Professor Ian Falk from the Northern Territory University, attest to the fact that Susan Johns is the sole author of all material contained in this chapter.

models value local cultural identity (see, for example, Ray 1999) and both develop and draw on the resources of individuals, groups and institutions. As McSwan and Barman-Jenssen (1999) note, rural community development is

a matter of recognising and acknowledging the values and desires of each individual ...  
specifically in order to become informed about the values and desires of the community (p. 46).

Central to more recent approaches to rural community development is the concept of intergenerational equity (McSwan & Barman-Jenssen 1999) as a key element of community sustainability. Intergenerational equity ensures that youth are well represented in community leadership (Kenyon & Black 2001).

Facilitating rural communities to take control of their future is about enhancing and ensuring a balance between economic, social and environmental development. There is a growing body of community development research within Australia and overseas (see, for example, Granovetter 1985; Flora & Flora 1993; Putnam 1993; CRLRA 2000, 2001; Woolcock & Narayan 2000; OECD 2001a; Temple 2001) to support the argument that sustainable economic, social and environmental development is realised through the development of human capital (individual skills) as well as social capital (social networks). As Woolcock and Narayan (2000) note, this focus reflects a significant departure from earlier approaches to community development which saw little relationship between social relationships and economic development.

### **Social capital theory and practice**

Definitions of social capital vary, but most researchers in the past decade would agree that social capital is centred on 'networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups' (OECD 2001a, p. 41). Although some researchers use terms other than 'social capital', they appear to be identifying and measuring a similar concept—the level and extent of relationships and networks based on trust. For example, Flora and Flora (1993) referred to entrepreneurial social infrastructure, to describe the strength of informal and formal social networks and their relationship to successful community development. In another example, Sharp (2001) used the term 'community field' to describe the relationship between network structure and capacity for community action, in his research into rural communities. Terminology aside, it is clear from the literature that social capital is about the link between relationships and networks, trust, and collective action and problem-solving.

The social capital concept derives in part from the work of Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988), who viewed social capital as a resource or asset that individuals acquire through their

relationships with others. However, in recent years, the focus of social capital has been broadened to apply to groups and communities (see, for example, Putnam 1993; Fukuyama 1995; Falk & Kilpatrick 2000; Woolcock & Narayan 2000; CRLRA 2000, 2001; OECD 2001a). In this sense, it is seen as a moral resource and a public good, which differentiates it from private capital (Putnam 1993). This more recent theorising about social capital has particular relevance for rural community development, in that it proposes that communities build stocks of social capital as they develop active relationships, engage in democratic participatory processes, and strengthen community ownership and trust, and that these are all necessary ingredients for rural community renewal (see, for example, Lane & Dorfman 1997). What sets social capital apart from some other forms of capital is that it accrues with use; therefore, the more social capital communities use, the more they produce (Cox 1995).

The preceding discussion assumes that social capital is always positive, yet there is a body of research that has focused on the negative aspects (Olson 1982; Portes & Landolt 1996) or 'dark side' (Putnam 2000b) of social capital. For example, where levels of social capital are high within strong civic groups, these groups may secure a disproportionate share of resources (i.e. exclude others) or may prevent members from engaging in broader networks. This suggests, as Woolcock (1998) points out, that more social capital is not necessarily better, and that it may hinder community development initiatives. This links closely with other research, which found that the quality of the social capital produced is related to the extent and diversity of interactions both within and outside groups and communities (Granovetter 1973, 1985; Flora & Flora 1993; Woolcock 1999). For example, Granovetter (1973, 1985) distinguished between two key types of social relations; personal or strong ties, and networks or weak ties. Woolcock (1999) furthered this research, by identifying the existence of three types of interactions representing three dimensions of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking. The difference between the three ties relates to the characteristics of the networks, and to the different types of trust and reciprocity developed (Stone & Hughes 2001). Bonding ties relate to close and often closed networks relating to family and ethnic groups, where trust is personalised to those who are familiar or known. Bridging ties relate to ties with a diverse range of individuals and/or organisations including civic and community groups, which gives rise to more generalised trust. Linking ties are seen as synonymous with individuals or institutions in power or authority; that is, institutional trust (Stone & Hughes 2001). Institutions represented include law and order, the church, the media, government, political parties, universities, and major businesses, with the last two linkages reported as being stronger in urban communities compared with rural communities (Stone & Hughes 2001). Linking ties may be used by individuals or communities to gain resources or power.

The breaking down of social capital into three distinct types of ties or networks, has particular relevance for rural communities. Research (Onyx & Bullen 2001; Stone & Hughes 2001) has identified that rural communities in general have high levels of bonding social capital, but lower levels of bridging and linking social capital, or what Stone and Hughes (2001) refer to as cross cutting ties, especially compared with urban communities. In particular, where rural communities have high levels of membership of civic and community groups, research has found those groups are more likely to be ethnically and culturally homogeneous than civic and community groups in urban areas (Stone & Hughes 2001). These authors, along with others (Woolcock 1999; Onyx & Bullen 2001; CRLRA 2000, 2001; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b) propose that it is bridging and linking social capital, or cross cutting ties, that are vital to rural community capacity building and sustainability.

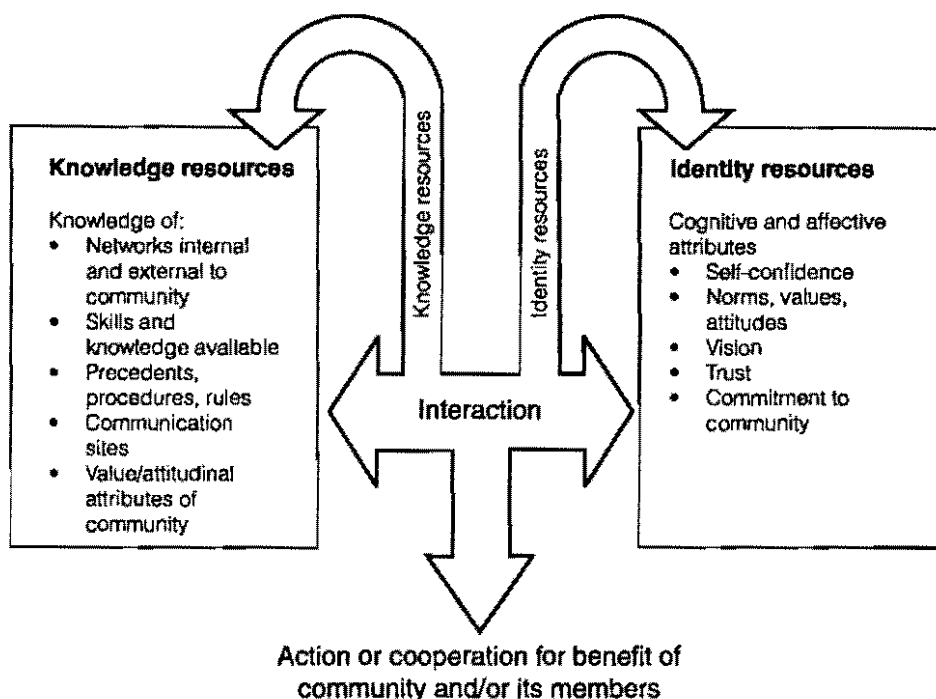
Building on the work of earlier researchers, Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) conducted research in rural and regional Australian communities in order to identify the processes involved in building and using social capital. They identified two groups of resources that people bring to interactions—knowledge and identity resources—and concluded that it is the quality of the knowledge and identity resources, and the extent to which individuals are prepared to utilise them for the collective good, that determines the quality of the social capital produced. Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) defined *knowledge resources* as a knowledge of who, when and where to go for advice or resources (e.g. networks, skills and knowledge available) and knowledge of how to get things done (e.g. precedents, procedures, rules, communication sites). *Identity resources* refer to the ability and willingness of individuals to act for the benefit of the community and its members, and include self confidence, values and attitudes, trust, vision, and commitment to the community. Falk and Kilpatrick's model (reproduced in Figure 1) is significant in terms of community development, because it highlights how social interactions are the engine of social capital.

The element of trust is interesting, in that some other researchers (see, for example, Woolcock 2001) tend to view trust as an outcome of social capital. However, in terms of researching the development and use of social capital within communities there is an argument, supported by Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) and OECD (2001a), that trust is both a source and an outcome of social capital. This would appear to be consistent with Cox (1995) who noted that unlike some other forms of capital which may become depleted with use, social capital accrues with use.

Research that has focused on documenting the link between levels of social capital and community outcomes has found that high levels of social capital have been linked to a variety of



**Figure 1: CRLRA model of building and using social capital**



Source: Falk, J. & Kilpatrick, S. 2000, 'What is social capital? A study of rural communities', *Sociologica Ruralis*, vol. 40, no. 1, p. 101.

positive community outcomes in terms of education, physical and mental health, lower crime rates, child welfare, better and more inclusive government, general wellbeing and happiness, as well as increased community pride and civic participation (see, for example, Putnam 2000a; CRLRA 2000, 2001; Kenyon & Black 2001; OECD 2001a). In terms of economic outcomes, studies have found that higher levels of social capital (trust) are linked to increased collaboration between groups or organisations at the community level, as well as to increased productivity of firms and organisations, and enhanced cooperation within firms (see, for example, Humphrey & Schmitz 1998; Putnam 2000a; Omori 2001).

Although social capital itself cannot be 'seen' and is therefore difficult to identify and measure, researchers have used a variety of indicators (social capital proxies) to identify and assess levels of community social capital. For example, at an individual level researchers have measured perceptions of levels of trust and reciprocity (see, for example, Falk & Guenther 1999; Putnam 2000a; Black & Hughes 2001). Others have used the eight OECD indicators of social and economic wellbeing as a measurement tool: health, education and learning, employment and quality of working life, time/leisure, command over goods and services, environment, social environment, and personal safety (see, for example, CRLRA 2000, 2001; Balatti & Falk 2002).

At the community level, indicators include an assessment of the amount of social and civic participation and volunteerism (see, for example, Narayan & Pritchett 1998; Putnam 2000a; Black & Hughes 2001; Stone & Hughes 2001), or identification of the types, strength, extent and/or diversity of network structures (see, for example, Flora & Flora 1993; CRLRA 2000, 2001; Black & Hughes 2001; Sharp 2001; Stone & Hughes 2001). As part of a longitudinal study of the link between levels of community social capital and vocational education and training (VET) delivery in rural and regional Australian communities, CRLRA (2000, 2001) modelled the VET provider networks in five different communities. This research concluded that communities that blended 'strong community-based goodwill with external networks and resources will achieve the most positive benefits' (CRLRA 2000, p. 114). In another example, Sharp (2001) analysed the network structures of three rural communities in North America, and found that communities with pyramidal or coalitional network structures are more likely to have an increased capacity for local action than communities with factional or amorphous network structures. However, Sharp cautioned that because power is concentrated in the hands of a few in the pyramidal network structure, there is a danger that this could be used to exclude certain groups. This concern about exclusion of certain individuals or groups from community social capital aligns with concerns regarding the negative aspects of social capital expressed by Olson (1982) and Portes and Landolt (1996), which were discussed earlier.

Of particular relevance to the current study is literature that has focused on leadership as a facilitator of community social capital. Such studies identify and analyse the structures that govern or enhance decisionmaking processes within the community, including leadership and conflict resolution processes (see, for example, Allen 1998; Black & Hughes 2001). This more recent focus on the links between leadership and social capital is important, not just as an indicator of community social capital, but because it furthers our understanding of the processes that facilitate the building and use of social capital. This research appears to be gaining in importance (see, for example, CRLRA 2000, 2001; Falk & Mulford 2001; Falk & Smith 2003), and is particularly relevant for the current study. Research that links leadership and social capital will be discussed further in the section on leadership later in this chapter.

### **The role of rural schools in community development**

It is beyond the scope of the current study to focus specifically on the educational outcomes of rural school–community partnerships for students. Rather, it views these outcomes in the context of the broader contributions that rural schools make to their communities in terms of community learning and community development. This is not to say that students' educational outcomes are not important in their own right. For example, research such as that by Capper (1993) indicates

that effective instruction in rural schools is mediated by school–community relationships ‘that can both constrain and enable structural and cultural aspects of schools’ (p. 20). The positive effects of home–school connections on student achievement and academic self concept have been documented in a number of studies (see, for example, Eccles & Harold 1996; Sanders 1998; Silins & Mulford 2002), although most of these studies are not specifically rural in focus. However, research also indicates that some home–school partnerships do not necessarily have positive outcomes. For example, Catsambis (1998) reports a negative correlation between the number of home–school communications and students’ achievement and behaviour.

That rural schools can and do play a role in the development of their communities is clearly illustrated in the literature, and has been the subject of research by sociologists, educators and economists for a number of years (Salant & Waller 1998). Salant and Waller (1998) conducted a review of over one hundred research articles and advocacy and position papers on rural school contributions to their communities, and concluded that ‘[s]chools have positive economic and social impacts, provide a resource for community development and offer a delivery point for social services’ (p. 2). This suggests a range of school contributions to the community, extending from relatively informal and unstructured, to formal and more structured contributions. The current study is particularly interested in the formal role of schools in contributing to community development through school–community partnerships, however, it is first necessary to acknowledge the broader, and more informal economic and social contributions of rural schools to their communities.

A number of studies discussed the economic impacts of rural schools on their communities. For example, Squires and Sinclair (1990) found that rural schools provided employment and that the school as a whole, as well as individual staff members, contributed to the viability of local enterprises by using local goods and services. Nunn’s (1994) Australian study measured the economic impacts of rural schools, by focusing on three rural high schools in the Wimmera District of Victoria. Nunn found, amongst other things, that 39 per cent of the combined gross income of teachers from the three schools was spent in their local communities, and the same percentage of local school bus contractors’ income was also spent locally. Additionally, both Squires and Sinclair (1990) and Nunn (1994) noted the considerable economic contribution of schools who share facilities and other resources (physical and human) with their community.

Miller (1991, 1995) identified school-based enterprises, such as the school farm or other enterprise developed by the school to meet community needs, as a contributor to community economic development. It has been found that such activities provide a number of benefits to

communities, including the provision of a service not previously available, expenditure in the local economy, and skill development and employment opportunities for local youth (Glen et al. 1992; Nachtigal 1994; Miller 1995). Although these studies indicate a link between rural schools and community economic wellbeing, there appears to be little research that objectively and rigorously measures the economic impacts of rural schools on their communities, a point noted by Salant and Waller (1998). In addition, Salant and Waller caution that much of the research on school contribution to the community conducted in the last decade, was driven by economic imperatives (by government pressure to consolidate small rural schools), and suggest that this may in part explain their lack of objectivity and analysis.

Other studies into the contribution of rural schools to their communities focus on the school as a community centre (Miller 1991, 1995), impacting on the social life of the community, and reflecting community attitudes, values and identity. A number of research projects have explored the social contribution of schools to rural communities, including the provision of cultural, sporting and other social activities (Squires & Sinclair 1990; Nunn 1994; Miller 1995; Johns et al. 2000a), and unification of the community and affirmation of community cohesiveness and identity through school-based events such as the school play (Bryant & Grady 1990; Squires & Sinclair 1990; Glen et al. 1992; Reynolds 1995; Lane & Dorfman 1997; Bowie 1998; Johns et al. 2000a). Significantly, research has found that if school values are not reflective of community values, support for the school diminishes and student enrolments may decline (see, for example, Nachtigal 1994).

Nachtigal (1994) and Miller (1991, 1995) also identified the social impacts of rural schools that used the community-as-curriculum approach, which involves students working with community members on a variety of projects relevant to their community. Outcomes of these have been identified in the research as building self confidence and self esteem of youth, increasing intergenerational links, and increased engagement of youth in the community (Miller 1995; Lane & Dorfman 1997; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b), and the provision of opportunities for lifelong learning (Kilpatrick, Bell & Kilpatrick 2001; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b). A key finding of research into the social impact of rural schools relates to community viability. In those rural communities under threat due to reduction of services such as banking and health, Glen et al. (1992) found that the school symbolised the identity and survival of the community. Building on this, it has been found (see, for example, Jolly & Deloney 1996; Hammer 2001) that many small rural communities have failed to remain socially and economically viable after losing their school.

Valuable as this research into the social impacts of schools in rural communities is, it has been the subject of similar criticism to that levelled at research into the economic impact of schools in rural communities; that is, its lack of objectivity and rigorous analysis. Specifically, Salant and Waller (1998) noted that many of these studies used a case study methodology, and were either descriptive (they documented the types of linkages that had been formed), or lacked specific detail in terms of the measurement indicators used to determine the impact of school–community partnerships. In addition, Salant and Waller (1998) questioned the extent to which studies such as that by Miller (1995) documented the complex relationship between youth, school and community, therefore questioning findings relating to the impact of the school on rural community development. This criticism is not entirely unfounded, however such research is still vital to our understanding of the contributions of schools to rural communities.

Research on the concept of schools as delivery points for community services, such as primary health care, mental health services, family planning and health education, is still at a relatively early stage, although the practice and its related research would seem to be more advanced in countries such as North America (see, for example, Dryfoos 1994; Gullotta & Noyes 1995) than in Australia. Even in North America, Epstein and Sanders (2000) note, many of these studies are still anecdotal, tending to focus on the mechanisms of integrating collaboration rather than on outcomes of collaborations for students, and the wider community. Salant and Waller (1998) suggested such research is particularly relevant for rural communities where schools occupy a central position and have the potential to impact significantly on most facets of community wellbeing. Within the Australian context in particular, this research is needed to inform policy makers, such as those involved in Indigenous education, who have identified inter-agency cooperation involving schools and government services as a key priority (McSwan, Clinch & Store 2001; Schwab & Sutherland 2001). For a full review of the outcomes of the Indigenous education forum, see *Unicorn*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1999.

### *Social capital and school–community partnerships*

The literature indicates that schools play two key roles in terms of community social capital. First, they provide students with the means to access the social capital of their community and to improve their life chances (see, for example, Coleman 1988; Driscoll & Kerchner 1999; Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman 2002). This is particularly important for students from areas with high unemployment, low socioeconomic status, and few community networks. In particular it has implications for rural students, in terms of assisting in retention in their communities (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b). Second, by providing opportunities for interaction, collaboration and shared learning between individuals and groups, and by transmitting community norms (culture), schools act as a catalyst for the building and use of community social capital; that is, as catalysts for

community capacity building (see, for example, Miller 1991, 1995; Nachtigal 1994; Lane & Dorfman 1997; OECD 2001a; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b). Whilst both roles are clearly linked, it is reasonable to assume that the first role is usually a planned and intentional school focus, whereas the school's community development role may occur as a spin off or unintentional outcome of the first role. This may also partly explain the lack of empirical research into school contributions to their communities reported earlier.

Recent years have seen a growing focus on schools as a community of learners, or a learning community, in which the principal is the leading learner, and the school is a learning brokerage enterprise (Beare 2002). In addition, the literature identifies schools as an integral component of larger learning communities or learning cities (Longworth 1999, 2002). Central to these larger learning communities or cities is a network of learners engaged in lifelong learning, where new ideas, expansive thinking and risk taking are nurtured and celebrated, and critical thinking developed (Ralph 2000). Learning cities are comprised of a number of relatively formalised relationships; that is, specifically designed and frequently ongoing partnerships, supported at the policy level. As formalised school–community partnerships have developed, a research base has developed accordingly. However, both policy and research into partnerships tend to focus on the outcomes of partnerships for students and the community, and factors that enhance or act as a barrier to partnership development, rather than on the partnership development process itself. This is illustrated in the following overview of VET in schools, information and communication technology, and Indigenous partnerships. These partnerships focus largely, but not exclusively, on the Australian context.

Much of the existing research on the outcomes of VET in schools partnerships focuses on education and training outcomes in terms of student pathways to further study and employment (see, for example, Lamb, Long & Malley 1998; Misko 1998; Misko & Slack 2001). However, apart from a very small number of studies (Smith 1996; Country Education Project Inc. & Youth Research Centre 2001; Kilpatrick, Bell & Kilpatrick 2001; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b; Johns et al. forthcoming), little of this research focuses specifically on VET in rural schools.

Evidence from VET in schools initiatives in rural communities, such as the Schools Industry Links Outreach or SILO program (Rural Skills Australia 2000), and indications from existing research (for example, Miller 1995; Smith 1996; Lane & Dorfman 1997; CRLRA 2000, 2001; Country Education Project Inc. & Youth Research Centre 2001; Kilpatrick, Bell & Kilpatrick 2001; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b; Johns et al. forthcoming), suggest that VET in schools partnerships have yielded additional benefits to rural communities. Some of these community benefits include

indications of an increased sense of belonging and acceptance amongst youth; increased youth retention in some rural communities; the provision of lifelong learning opportunities and more positive attitudes to education and learning within the community; and the building of networks between students and local employers, employers and students' families, and between participating businesses themselves. Specifically, the provision of VET in small rural schools with limited facilities has been found to encourage the development of partnerships and cluster arrangements involving a number of other schools, other training providers, and local industry (Country Education Project Inc. & Youth Research Centre 2001).

The community outcomes of rural VET in schools partnerships have important social and economic implications for rural communities, in the light of the relatively high suicide rates for rural youth compared with their urban counterparts (Smith 1996); the education and employment disadvantages of rural youth (Cunningham et al. 1992; Lamb, Long & Malley 1998; Lamb & Rumberger 1999); and the fact that education in general has been reported in research to be less valued and seen as less relevant by rural students and their families (Cunningham et al. 1992). However, a review of the VET in schools literature also indicates that further research is required in order to document the role of VET in schools programs in rural community development. The indications are that the development of such programs, in addition to providing education and training outcomes for youth, also stimulate relationships between school and community which cross traditional boundaries and facilitate the building of community social capital (Kilpatrick, Bell & Kilpatrick 2001; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b).

In terms of information and communication technology partnerships, Jolly and Deloney's (1996) research identified the positive link between advanced telecommunications technology within the school, its availability for use by the wider community, and its impact in terms of rural economic development. Similar positive links have been identified in other research (see, for example, Kilpatrick et al. 2002b). Building on the earlier work of Coleman and Hoffer (1987), Jolly and Deloney (1996) noted that high levels of social capital and the existence of a functional community (one in which adults take an interest in and responsibility for the activities of children other than their own) are prerequisites for developing a 'symbiotic relationship between a school and a community' and that 'integrating school and community development efforts will produce a synergistic effect' (p. 25).

Turning to partnerships between the school and Indigenous youth, their families and their communities, policy and research into partnerships for the delivery of education to Indigenous students tends to focus on factors that enhance or prevent partnership development. For example,

within Australia the MCEETYA (2000b) *Model of More Culturally Inclusive and Educationally Effective Schools* identifies the need for a collective understanding within the school of the importance of the partnerships, and places responsibility for implementation of the partnership on school leaders. Boston (1999) and Schwab and Sutherland (2001) cited several examples of effective school–community partnerships involving Indigenous communities, noting that all had been developed through collaboration and shared decisionmaking between the school and the Indigenous (and, where relevant, non-Indigenous) communities. Specific strategies for enhancing partnerships with Indigenous communities identified in the research include the need to remove barriers that may prevent Indigenous people from becoming involved; fully involve Indigenous parents in efforts aimed at increasing school attendance, and increase the number of Indigenous teaching staff (Northern Territory Department of Education 1999). Research into a school–community approach to the treatment of otitis media in Indigenous children in rural communities (McSwan, Clinch & Store 2001) concluded that

In previous years programs have failed because of their ‘one way’ approach to the giving and receiving of information rather than an exchange or sharing of knowledge between the community and the ‘experts’ (p. 31).

They also identified that any successful partnership needs to be well planned and evaluated. In short, the direction of both research and policy in relation to Indigenous education emphasises the need to develop learning communities in order to address the limited engagement of Indigenous Australians in education. Such communities ‘would aim to unite families, schools and communities to identify and address local needs through drawing upon local resources’ (Schwab & Sutherland 2001, p. 3).

The preceding discussion suggests that as schools become more aware of their influence in terms of community development, attention needs to be paid to the leadership processes through which they develop partnerships with their communities. Researchers such as Stauber (2001) and Hammer (2001) suggest this is most likely to happen when policymakers simultaneously address rural community development and strengthen small rural schools and districts in which social capital resides. Whilst some research has already been conducted into the process of partnership development (see, for example, Jolly & Deloney 1996; Lane & Dorfman 1997; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b), there would seem to be a need for further research that analyses approaches and processes for developing and maintaining effective school–community links. The current study aims to contribute to this area of research. Existing research into the close links between leadership and community development will be considered later in Section Three of this literature review.



## **Section Two: Leadership in the context of schools and communities**

The previous discussion demonstrates that rural schools have the potential to make significant contributions to community renewal, particularly in terms of building community capacity or social capital. In terms of community development, the link between social capital and leadership is crucial, in that successful rural community renewal depends on 'the way the community leads the development of its stores of social capital' (Falk & Mulford 2001, p. 221). This view is consistent with that of Putnam (1993) who identified those involved in community leadership as social capital entrepreneurs. The focus of this section of the literature review is, therefore, on the sort of leadership required to facilitate community learning and renewal through school-community partnerships. It will review relevant educational, organisational and community leadership theory and research, and will argue for a new view of leadership as a process of community development (Barker 1997; Lane & Dorfman 1997).

Before beginning to explore the links between leadership and the development of social capital, it is first necessary to determine what is meant by the term 'leadership', and to overview the changing paradigms of leadership that have informed research and practice over the past quarter of a century. It is clear from the literature that the function of leadership is to create change, and as such it focuses on uncertainty and the unknown (Barker 1997). Leadership is therefore distinguished from management, which focuses on creating stability and managing the change process (Barker 1997). Whilst the literature is clear on the differentiation between leadership and management (that is, on defining what is *not* meant by leadership), it has placed less emphasis on defining what *is* meant by leadership. For example, a study conducted in 1991 of 587 works on leadership (Rost 1991), found that two thirds of them did not offer a definition of the term, although other theorists (see, for example, Leithwood & Duke 1999) believe this is understandable given the complex nature of the concept. Despite the lack of specific definition, much of the leadership literature and research can be categorised according to one of three leadership paradigms: that is, whether leadership is viewed as an ability, a relationship, or a process (Barker 1997). Understandings of leadership differ according to each paradigm, therefore each will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

### **Changing paradigms of leadership**

#### *Leadership as an ability*

Where leadership is defined in the literature, it has been most commonly been associated with varying levels of authority, manipulation or influence over others by an individual, or what

Barker (1994) describes as a feudal or 'man [sic] at the top' view. As Katzenbach and Smith (1992, p. 129) explain, 'leadership has traditionally been synonymous with authority, and authority has traditionally been understood as the ability to command others, control subordinates, and make all the truly important decisions yourself'. Clearly the focus is very much on the leader. This traditional leadership paradigm views leadership as an *ability* (or a set of generic traits or behaviours) possessed by certain individuals or 'leaders'. Essentially this view sees leadership as transactional in nature, in that followers comply with the leader in exchange for economic, political and/or psychological gain (Leithwood & Duke 1999). Researchers such as Barker (1997) considered this view of leadership to be based on confusion between management and leadership, and suggested that '[w]hen we think of the ability of leaders, we are probably thinking of the ability of leaders to manage' (p. 6). Not surprisingly, he noted, this view of leadership has enjoyed popularity with leadership trainers because the leadership act could be reduced to a series of steps that could be taught.

The literature highlights a number of limitations to this view of leadership, including the assumption that there is one 'right' way to do the job, regardless of the situation or context in which leadership occurs. However, it is now generally accepted that this view of leadership is less appropriate for the complex and rapidly changing issues and problems facing 21<sup>st</sup> century society, where goals are less clearly defined, and where complex problems cannot be solved by imposing order from above, or by employing a set of generic leadership skills. For example, in his review of theoretical and empirical literature on leadership and school accountability, Leithwood (2001) concluded that much leadership research had underestimated the effects of school leadership because it did not focus on domain (content) specific leadership practices, and that

[t]here is evidence to suggest that a substantial portion of the variation in school leaders' problem-solving expertise is explained by the possession of such domain-specific knowledge (p. 231).

Falk and Smith (2003) reached a similar conclusion regarding leadership in the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

This is not to say that leadership viewed in terms of the management ability of individuals has no place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, as Barker (1997) notes, this view of leadership is appropriate to the military or to orchestral conduct, where there is a need to impose order to accomplish specific goals. However, the limitations of the traditional leadership paradigm have led researchers and theorists to seek new concepts of leadership. For example, Leithwood, Begley and Cousins (1994) referred to the need for leadership to solve 'swampy ground problems',

which constitute a high proportion of the problems faced by school (and other) leaders. 'Swampy ground problems' typically involve a number of people from both within and outside the school, and require a problem-solving approach. Leithwood, Begley and Cousins found that leaders engaged in 'swampy problems' are more likely to believe that collaborative problem-solving leads to better solutions and to an increased long-term capacity to solve future problems. This is akin to the notion of leadership by 'visionary teams', proposed by Bryman, Gillingwater and McGuinness (1996). At the heart of collaboration and capacity building is relationships, and this is the focus of the second major leadership paradigm.

### *Leadership as a relationship*

In considering the second leadership paradigm—leadership as a *relationship*—the emphasis is on interaction between people. Leadership is therefore created as leaders and followers interact. As discussed earlier in this chapter, social capital is built through interactions between people, so the links between leadership and the building of social capital have their foundations in this leadership paradigm.

A variety of leadership theories and models can loosely be grouped into the 'relationships' category, representing a continuum in terms of the extent to which leadership is determined by the roles and role expectations of leaders and followers. To some extent, then, such models and theories therefore still have a focus on the 'leader', his/her motives and the way he/she empowers (or transforms) others. For example, many theories conceive of leadership as a relationship between leader and followers, in which the leader's fundamental beliefs and values, and their desire to serve or empower others, are central to the relationship. These include servant leadership (Greenleaf 1977), moral leadership (Leithwood & Duke 1999), values-based leadership (O'Toole 1995), and spiritual leadership (Deal 1995; Fairholm 1998). The moral responsibilities of leaders motivate them to act as teachers, and to understand the needs of, to interact with, and to raise the consciousness of, followers.

However, the 'leadership as a relationship' paradigm differs significantly from the view of leadership as an ability, because of the nature of the relationship between leaders and followers—it is a non-supervisory, dynamic social and political relationship (Barker 1997), as compared to the supervisory nature of the leader-follower relationship implied in the traditional leadership activity paradigm. Rost (1991) focused on the leadership relationship in terms of achieving mutual goals, and developed this further when he defined leadership as 'an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes' (Rost 1993, p. 99), in which both leaders and collaborators bring resources to the relationship that are

useful for accomplishing their intended changes. This aligns closely with the knowledge and identity resources central to the building and use of social capital discussed earlier (see Falk & Kilpatrick 2000), and suggests that such a model of leadership is likely to facilitate the development of community social capital. Central to Rost's definition is a shift from the term 'follower' to 'collaborator', because everyone is involved in the same leadership relationship, and an emphasis on the *intention* of leaders and collaborators to produce change, that signals a shift from earlier theories that defined leadership in terms of the achievement of desired outcomes. Again this would seem to align closely with social capital building theory, which places emphasis on social capital as a process of capacity building (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000), not as a series of outcomes. Following Rost's (1993) definition, the term collaborators will be used for the remainder of this literature review.

Even given the reciprocal nature of relationships inherent in Rost's conception of leadership, to some extent there is still a focus on what sets leaders apart from collaborators—that is, their characteristics, abilities and behaviours. For example, Rost (1991) suggests that leaders are differentiated from collaborators because of the level of power resources they possess that allow them to exercise greater influence. Other resources include a variety of skills, characteristics and attributes held by the leader such as reputation, prestige, personality, status, interpersonal and group skills, and authority.

The notion of the leader–collaborator relationship as one of transformation is central to the leadership as a relationship paradigm. The concept of transformation originally derived from the model of transforming leadership proposed by Burns (1978). Burns's model described leadership as 'the reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers' (p. 425). Burns conceived of leadership as even more than a relationship—in particular, as a complex social and political process. It is important to note that Burns's original conception of transforming leadership as a process, its gradual disappearance from the literature, and its recent re-emergence, are particularly relevant to the current study, and will be discussed further in the next section on leadership as a process. However, at the time it was proposed, Burns's (1978) view of transforming leadership appeared 'beyond the grasp of most ordinary mortals' (Couto n.d., p. 2), and was to a large extent supplanted by the concept of *transformational* leadership (Bass 1985).

Much has been written about transformational leadership, particularly in the fields of education and management. However, it needs to be recognised that, like the concept of leadership in

general, there are differing definitions and conceptions of transformational leadership. Those differences relate largely to the extent to which leadership is focused on developing and meeting the leader's goals (for the good of the organisation), as opposed to the shared goals of the group (employee/collaborator satisfaction). For example, Bass (1985) and Graham (1991) described transformational leadership as a largely one-way relationship in which leaders transform followers by providing charismatic and inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration, and by elevating them to higher levels of commitment and motivation. When he described the way in which 'transformational leaders encourage charismatically-led followers to develop their skills so that they might eventually demonstrate initiative in working for the leader's goals' (Graham 1991, p. 116), it is clear that Graham conceived of transformational leadership as leader controlled, and more as a skill or ability, consistent with the traditional leadership as an ability paradigm.

Contrasted with Graham's (1991) more limited view of transformational leadership, are the views of educational researchers such as Leithwood, Begley and Cousins (1994) and Gurr (1996), who shift the focus from a one-way, to a reciprocal leader–collaborator relationship. Such leadership, which Leithwood (1994) called a leadership of commitment, is characterised by developing a widely shared school vision (Duke & Leithwood 1994; Mulford 1994); developing a collaborative culture which supports the school's vision (Deal & Peterson 1994; Duke & Leithwood 1994); fostering the commitment and capacity of staff to achieve collective goals (Duke & Leithwood 1994); facilitating participation in school decisionmaking (Leithwood & Duke 1999); high performance expectations; distributing responsibility for leadership; providing staff with collaborative planning time, and supporting collaboration with funding (Leithwood 1994). As a consequence, as Sergiovanni (1990) noted, transformational leadership necessitates a refocusing of the role of the principal as one who 'aids in the definition, strengthening and articulating of a school's values, beliefs and cultural strands that make the school unique' (p. 31).

Central to the conception of leadership as a relationship is its distributive orientation, which focuses on the relationship among the players. Foreshadowing the growth of school–community partnerships and the need for distributive leadership to extend beyond school personnel, Leithwood (2001, p. 232) concluded:

Better understanding of school leadership as a distributed network of relationships within and across people and organizations represents a major new challenge for those engaged in research on school leadership.

It is the focus on the distributed network of relationships, and the multiple and complex contexts in which leadership takes place, that appears to be missing from much of the earlier research on effective leadership. This issue will be addressed in the discussion of the third leadership paradigm, leadership as a process.

### *Leadership as a process*

The discussion thus far has focused largely on effective leadership within the bounded entity of organisations or groups. However, the focus of the current study is on leadership that facilitates rural community development—that is, leadership which crosses traditional organisational or group boundaries, and involves many community sectors. Clearly the type of leadership needed here still relies heavily on relationships. However, what may be more appropriate is an emerging leadership paradigm that extends and challenges leadership thinking, by moving the focus beyond the leader and his/her relationships with others, and conceives of leadership as a dynamic and collaborative *process* comprised of many complex relationships, in which leadership roles are not clearly defined (Barker 1997). Exponents of this new, critical approach to leadership (see, for example, Gemmill & Oakley 1992; Barker 1997; Falk & Mulford 2001; Gunter 2001; Falk & Smith 2003) view leadership as a social process, through which new roles and role expectations can be developed where none may previously have existed—‘the leadership process provides the vehicle for creating leadership relationships’ (Barker 1997, p. 9). Individuals and representatives of groups and organisations are therefore encouraged to ‘experiment with new forms of intellectual and social meaning’ (Gemmill & Oakley 1992, p. 124).

This emerging leadership paradigm would appear to have its roots in Burns’s (1978) original theory of transforming leadership, which was introduced earlier. The key elements of transforming leadership (Burns 1978) that have informed the emergence of the leadership process paradigm are the focus on purpose (the development of shared values in order to realise shared goals) and on process (the political and social process of developing shared values, which happens within a context of competition and conflict). At the heart of the leadership process are the differing ethics or ‘end values’ of individuals (Burns 1978). Barker (1997) conceived of individual ethics as a combination of moral insight and experience, and culturally derived values. Leadership is therefore viewed as a social process through which the ethics of individuals are aligned, to produce a shared or collective vision. As a result of this process, role expectations and contractual commitments are determined, to allow groups to realise their collective goals and bring about the desired change (Barker 1997). Given that leadership is about creating change, Burns’s (1978) focus on conflict and competition is important, and is at the heart of the leadership process paradigm. Far from being a negative force, conflict amongst individuals in

terms of their values and visions, is essential to the leadership process because it 'gives people incentive to consider actions, trade-offs, and sacrifices that they would not have considered otherwise' (Barker 1997, p. 10).

As Couto (n.d.) points out, the original name, transforming leadership (as opposed to the later variant transformational leadership), is significant, in that it is the adjectival form of a verb, and is strongly suggestive of leadership as a dynamic process rather than as a state. In its original form, transforming leadership described a process of 'reciprocal interaction among people with potentially conflicting goals, values, and ideals' (Barker 1997, p. 7), where the process and outcomes were not controlled or predetermined, but were constructed by the participants. This is suggestive of a constructivist approach to leadership, proposed by more recent researchers, including Lambert et al. (1995). For example, Lambert et al. (1995) conceived of educational leadership as a reciprocal learning process amongst people who share goals and visions. They described how the process is jointly owned and constructed, and focuses on the leadership processes associated with a specific event designed to bring about strategic change.

Rost (1991), and later Sergiovanni (1994) who was writing on leadership to facilitate building community in schools, described leadership as comprising multiple actors, being multi-directional and not coercive. When schools are conceived of as learning communities (Sergiovanni 1994; New South Wales Department of School Education 1995; Lambert 1998; Hipp & Huffman 2000; Beare 2002), in which individual learning is symbiotically linked to organisational learning (Senge 1990), the constructivist view of leadership assumes greater relevance. Central to such communities is a different view of relationships: that is, relationships and interdependencies are created through interaction, as opposed to relationships which 'are constructed for us by others and [which] become codified into a system of hierarchies, roles and role expectations' (Sergiovanni 1994, p. 4). As Lambert (1998, p. 5) noted, this means that leadership

needs to be a broad concept that is separated from person, role, and a discrete set of individual behaviors. It needs to be embedded in the school community as a whole. Such a broadening of the concept of leadership suggests shared responsibility for a shared purpose of community.

The conception of schools as communities has a number of implications for educational leadership, not the least of which is a new definition of leadership as 'the exercise of wit and will, principle and passion, time and talent, and purpose and power in a way that allows the group to increase the likelihood that shared goals will be accomplished' (Sergiovanni 1994, p. 170).

School principals are critical enablers of this process, because of their ability to transform individual interests into shared visions (Hipp & Huffman 2000). Specifically, principals develop schools as professional learning communities when they share leadership, inspire responsibility for a shared vision, and foster empowered decisionmaking and inclusivity of staff (Hipp & Huffman 2000). The conception of leadership as a shared activity represents a clear shift in focus, from leaders and collaborators, to a community of leaders and a community of learners, with the principal as the leading learner (New South Wales Department of School Education 1995). In their study of the relationship between transformative leadership and the development of a community school culture in a new state primary school in New Zealand, Gorinski and Davey (2000) concluded that a critical role of effective leaders is fostering a learning environment to support critical reflection and cognitive development within the school community. Critical reflection by principal and staff brings about a transformation of leadership structures, in which leadership and the development of school culture become a problem-solving experience best addressed by a team approach. Leadership is therefore equated with a learning process, through which members of the school community are encouraged to participate in critical reflection, debate and inquiry, and to take risks. As Gorinski and Davey (2000, p. 4) concluded:

Leaders with a commitment to lifelong learning, demonstrate they are also continuous learners. They ask questions and seek feedback to improve their own practice, and that of the learning community as a whole.

This links with research by Bass (2000) and Silins and Mulford (2002) that found positive links between transformational leadership practices within schools and their level of organisational learning and the extent of their distributive leadership. Of particular relevance is the first stage of research by Silins and Mulford, reported in Silins, Mulford and Zarins (1999), which identified four sub scales of organisational learning in schools that were influenced by the transformational leadership practices of the principal: a trusting and collaborative climate; willingness to take initiatives and risks; a shared and monitored school mission, and ongoing, relevant and challenging professional development.

The constructivist view of leadership, with its roots in Burns' (1978) transforming leadership, is particularly relevant to leadership through partnerships. For example, in his book on strategies for developing school–community partnerships, Street (1997) highlighted the role of participatory and transforming leadership because they foster a culture of involvement in decisionmaking even where formal structures to facilitate this do not exist. This would seem to be a critical point, in that school–community partnerships require the development of new relationships and new leadership processes that cross traditional boundaries. What sets the leadership as a process



paradigm apart from others is the way in which the leadership process creates the leader, rather than the leader creating the process, hence its relevance for leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in which 'the speed and nature of change ... have re-focused our attention on the situations that demand a leadership of enablement, rather than on the 'person' themselves' (Falk & Mulford 2001, p. 226).

Research indicates that the leadership process is context-dependent (see, for example, Langone & Rohs 1995; Falk & Smith 2003), in that it is determined by the interaction between three dimensions: the attributes of all the individuals who play a part in the leadership process; internal organisational roles and responsibilities of stakeholders; and the external environment. In proposing their new community leadership model, which they describe as 'enabling' leadership, Falk and Mulford (2001) highlight the importance of context in that leadership needs to be 'situated in a particular location, with particular needs and particular planned outcomes in the form of *enabling others*' (p. 227). In terms of the effectiveness of enabling leadership, recent research has shown enabling leadership facilitates the building and use of social capital by building internal networks, links between internal and external networks, historicity, shared visions, shared communication, and self confidence (Falk & Mulford 2001; CRLRA 2001; Falk & Smith 2003). In short, the leadership process builds trust between network members, which Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) have identified as a clear leadership role.

This emerging paradigm of leadership as a collaborative process would appear to have direct relevance for the ever-increasing array of school–community partnerships evident within the literature, in terms of providing a vehicle (the process) for all community sectors to work together to effect change (see, for example, Wilkinson 1991; Barker 1997; Falk & Mulford 2001). However, further research is still needed into the nature of this type of leadership, how it might be developed and sustained within communities and elsewhere, and its relative advantages and disadvantages. At this stage it may seem to represent a leadership 'ideal' that may not be attainable in real life, in much the same way that Burns's (1978) transforming leadership was originally viewed as 'beyond the grasp of most ordinary mortals' (Couto n.d., p. 2). However, the strength of the emerging leadership process paradigm is that it builds on much of what has been learnt about effective leadership in the decades since Burns first proposed his theory.

## **The process of facilitating collaborative leadership**

### *Group leadership in schools and organisations*

As noted in the preceding section, educational leadership literature (see, for example, Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin 1996; Sammons, Thomas & Mortimore 1997; Mulford 2002)

increasingly focuses on the need to develop shared visions and goals amongst staff, and to facilitate their participation in decisionmaking, in order to promote better student outcomes and to support the implementation of large scale initiatives. This is linked to school effectiveness literature that identifies a positive relationship between shared leadership and organisational capacity building (see, for example, Stoll, MacBeath & Mortimore 2001). In more recent years capacity building within schools and organisations has been linked to organisational learning through teams and groups, and attention has focused on the process of facilitating effective work groups. In management literature, there is a similar focus on work groups as an effective strategy to increase organisational learning. Literature on group formation processes, team learning, and organisational learning, is therefore relevant to the current study.

In terms of group formation, early literature (Tuckman 1965) identified four stages of development: forming, storming, norming, and performing, to which Mulford et al. (1981) later added a further three stages, dorming, transforming and mourning. These stages of development document a learning process that shifts from individual self interests, to the development of shared values and trust (storming, norming), to collective action (performing), to critical reflection (transforming)—that is, they document the group learning process. However, as Mulford (2002) cautioned, some groups do not progress beyond the first three stages—forming, storming and norming—and thus are unable to perform effectively. Referring to Silins and Mulford's (2002) research into organisational learning in Australian secondary schools which identified four factors or subscales of organisational learning documented earlier in this chapter, Mulford (2002) provided a framework for viewing the linkages between group formation and organisational learning. He conceived of the forming, storming, and norming stages of group development as closely related to the trusting and collaborative climate subscale of organisational learning. The performing stage of group development is closely aligned with the shared and monitored mission subscale of organisational learning. The transforming stage of group development, Mulford (2002) proposed, links closely with the third and fourth subscales of organisational learning; that is, taking initiatives and risks, and professional development.

The transforming stage of group formation (Mulford et al. 1981), which occurs after the dorming stage, appears to be significant to effective group formation and hence, to organisational learning. At the dorming stage, 'the momentum of success allow[s] the group to 'coast' for a while' (Mulford 2002, p. 134), followed by the transforming stage during which groups seek feedback about group performance, and make changes as a result of that feedback (Mulford 2002). Linked to research by Brookfield (1995) on critical reflection as a social process, this stage focuses on group reflexivity, that is, the way in which teams critically reflect on and make appropriate

changes to (or transform) the way they operate. The concept of critical reflection is also reflected in research into team effectiveness. Research into team learning identifies reflexivity as a key element (Cardno 1999; West 1999; Schippers, Den Hartog & Koopman 2001; Mulford 2002). Specifically, team effectiveness research (Cardno 1999; Schippers, Den Hartog & Koopman 2001) indicates that reflexivity is facilitated by ongoing productive dialogue within the team, a high degree of trust amongst team members, shared vision, and 'inspirational leadership' (Schippers, Den Hartog & Koopman 2001) whereby leaders encourage the team to reflect on tasks, goals and processes. Indicators of reflexivity in team learning include the way in which errors are treated as a learning opportunity, and the extent to which feedback on team performance is actively sought (Schippers, Den Hartog & Koopman 2001). Whilst reflexivity is a skill that can be taught in training sessions, Schippers, Den Hartog and Koopman (2001) cautioned that it may be a short-lived trend unless time is taken to embed it within the culture of the organisation. This supports Gorinski and Davey's (2000) findings regarding the importance of critical reflection in the development of school culture. Interestingly, as Schippers, Den Hartog and Koopman (2001) note, few researchers have focused on the act of reflection in team learning, tending to focus more on the planning and action stages, indicating that more research is needed in this area.

Team effectiveness research highlights the need to build the capacity of both individuals and groups to learn together in teams, and details the conditions in which such learning can take place. Researchers in organisational learning (see, for example, Senge et al. 1999) and team development (see, for example, Hackman 2002) document various strategies for increasing learning capacities, including adequate time to reflect on and internalise proposed change; adequate organisational support to develop groups and build organisational capacity, and the role of creative conflict (a need to discuss divisive topics critically and dispassionately). In particular, the way in which conflict is handled has been found critical to team development within schools (Cardno 1999; Achinstein 2002). This supports Burns's (1978) theory of transforming leadership, which identified conflict and competition as essential to the leadership process.

Particularly relevant to the current study into cross-sectoral partnerships, is research conducted by various government health departments into the factors that enhance and inhibit greater integration of health care professionals from various sectors such as community and primary care, into self-managed teams. For example, research by the British NHS (2000) found that integrated teams work well when the team has clarity of vision, where there is emphasis on the competencies and skills that members bring to the team rather than on their traditional roles, and where there are opportunities for shared learning. These factors link closely with those identified

by Hackman (2002) in relation to effective teams within organisations, and also align with research into leadership as a process discussed earlier (see, for example, Barker 1997), whereby leadership roles are not clearly defined, necessitating the development of new leadership roles and role expectations.

### *Leading community development*

As noted earlier in Section Two, leadership for community development differs from traditional leadership within schools and organisations, in that it needs to involve individuals from diverse backgrounds, as well as cross many different community groups and sectors. Even though these groups may share similar aims and be working towards similar outcomes, each has its own culture and ways of operating. In addition, many of those who undertake leadership roles tend to be concerned citizens rather than formally designated leaders, so issues of reciprocal or egalitarian leadership may assume particular importance (Langone & Rohs 1995). However, like effective school and organisational leadership through teams/groups, effective community leadership is reported in the literature as a developmental process of individual and community capacity building. For example, Wilkinson (1991), writing about rural community development in North America, emphasised that effective community development occurs when the actors focus specifically on building community relationships that will allow them to pursue specific tasks and goals, rather than focusing solely on the attainment of goals themselves. This supports the belief that effective leadership for community development is characterised by a facilitative or capacity-building purpose—that is, the development of social capital. Although writing on leadership to facilitate organisational learning, rather than community leadership, the definition proposed by Senge et al. (1999) has a similar capacity building focus. They define leadership as ‘the capacity of a human community to shape its future, and specifically to sustain the significant processes of change required to do so’ (p. 16). Continuous or lifelong learning would appear to be central to the process, including ‘learning about how groups learn and share their knowledge about projects’ (Hill & Moore 2002, p. 19).

From their studies of a number of cases of community collaboration in North America, Chrislip and Larson (1994, p. 5) identified successful communities as those which featured collaborative leadership practices which they defined as

a mutually beneficial relationship between two or more parties who work toward common goals by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability for achieving results ...

Collaborative leadership bears some similarity to servant leadership (Greenleaf 1977), transforming leadership (Burns 1978) and transformational leadership (Bass 2000) discussed

earlier, in that all three focus on meeting the needs of leaders and collaborators, and involve stakeholders working together as peers. Just as transforming and transformational leadership is about building individual capacity and facilitating wider social change, Chrislip and Larson (1994) emphasised that collaborative leadership also has a much broader purpose—to build civic community, or community social capital, whilst at the same time yielding tangible outcomes—and note that the shift from narrow, individual interests to broader community interests occurs gradually as the initiative evolves. This supports the earlier work by Wilkinson (1991) on the purposes of leadership, and provides a link to later research by Lane and Dorfman (1997) and Henton, Melville and Walesh (1997). For example, there is similarity between Chrislip and Larsons' (1994) and Lane and Dorfman's (1997) elements of effective community collaboration, which include broad-based collaborative and integrated involvement and participation; peer-based relationships among diverse stakeholders which are facilitated by collaborative leaders; the commitment/involvement of high level, visible leaders; multiple partners and multiple partnership levels; the community as the change agent; and goals that are both process oriented (building social capital) and task oriented (using social capital to achieve goals). Chrislip and Larson (1994) also identified good timing and a clear need for change, credibility and openness of the leadership process, and the need to acknowledge and celebrate interim successes in order to sustain credibility and ensure the continued commitment of stakeholders, as further keys to effective collaboration.

Wilkinson (1991) identified community development as a capacity-building process, starting with creating an awareness of a need or opportunity within the community, and leading through to the implementation of a strategy to meet those needs. Echoing this process, Fawcett et al. (1995) identified four broad enabling activities that facilitate the process of community empowerment through collaborative community health partnerships. The process begins with enhancing experience and competence, for example, by holding community meetings to identify issues and possible solutions. Other activities include enhancing group structures and capacity; removing social and environmental barriers by publicising the partnership, holding meetings in diverse locations to encourage community participation, and providing training in conflict resolution; and enhancing environmental support and resources by continuing to provide information and feedback on the initiative and continuing to focus on reinventing and adapting initiatives.

Whilst Pigg (1996) supported the concept of the capacity building process, he did not view the whole process as one of leadership, but rather as a continuum extending from leadership to management. He identified the earlier stages of the process as leadership, and the later stages as management, in that 'the relationships become more instrumental than affective, the purposes

take on the character of strategies and implementation plans, and leaders become more concerned with mobilizing resources and getting the job done' (Pigg 1996, p. 21). The way in which the nature of relationships changes, depending on the changing nature of the task at hand, is supported by other community development researchers (see, for example, Taylor 2000), and also by organisational development researchers (see, for example, Pratt, Gordon & Plamping 1999). For example, Pratt, Gordon and Plamping identified three different forms of engagement—cooperation, coordination, and collaboration—and argued that coordination is more appropriate where goals are known and predictable, whereas collaboration is the most appropriate when the environment is uncertain, the problems complex, and the strategies to resolve them are unknown. The issue of collaborative relationships is of particular relevance to the current study, because rural community development is characterised by uncertainty and complexity, and because research shows that it is through interaction and collaboration that social capital is built (Potapchuk & Crocker 1999; Falk & Kilpatrick 2000).

In the same way that the nature of relationships changes during the course of the leadership process, research indicates that the players themselves also rotate, in that effective leadership in the community environment 'is shared by many individuals at various times depending on the situation and the required leadership skills' (Langone & Rohs 1995, p. 253). It is this focus on both the shared and situated nature of leadership that aligns effective community leadership with the emerging leadership as a process paradigm discussed earlier. Research (see, for example, Raftery 1993; Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997) indicates that such leaders come from all sectors of the community, including public, private, and non-profit sectors. In particular, the literature on collaborative leadership highlights the role of leaders who do not hold formal leadership positions within the community (see Chrislip & Larson 1994; Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997). Henton, Melville and Walesh (1997) described them as 'civic entrepreneurs'—change agents working for the good of the community—whose job is to 'build consensus and move diverse communities ahead, patiently and without formal authority or position' (p. xvii). Drawing leadership from such a diverse base brings with it a number of problems. Research identified these as including the ambivalent position and divided loyalties of leaders from different community sectors (Purdue et al. 2000), and the threat posed to traditional, formal leaders by informal community leaders who challenge existing practices and 'empower people by engaging them on issues of shared concern and helping them achieve results by working together constructively' (Chrislip & Larson 1994, p. 145).

Collaborative leadership is at the heart of the recent and continuing focus of the government and private sector on partnerships. Accordingly, research on the process of developing partnerships,

as opposed to research on partnership outcomes and on partnership barriers and enhancers discussed earlier, is gradually increasing. The following section will overview key research into the partnership development process.

## **Section Three: Partnerships and community development**

### **How do school and community leadership processes influence rural community development through school-community partnerships?**

As modern society has become more complex and therefore less predictable, so has the task of leadership. The preceding section overviewed the way in which leadership paradigms have changed across the decades to respond to this complexity and uncertainty, by placing emphasis on the need for leadership to be a collaborative or shared practice. It also demonstrated that effective leadership is about building the capacity of individuals and groups to determine their own futures; a marked contrast from the top down, hierarchical approaches of earlier times. This is illustrated by the distributive leadership models and transformational leadership practices evident within schools and other organisations, and the collaborative leadership models at the heart of effective community development practices.

Collaborative models are particularly relevant to this discussion in that partnerships represent a process through which collaborative leadership is exercised and sustained. This section will review the literature on partnership development, beginning with a consideration of communities of practice, and then moving on to examine partnership research in relation to a number of areas: rural community regeneration (see, for example, Edwards et al. 2000); urban renewal (see, for example, Purdue et al. 2000); and empowerment of poor and underserved communities (see, for example, Chavis 1995). In particular it focuses on partnership research aimed at addressing issues related to education, training and employment (see, for example, Kearns, Murphy & Villiers 1996; Street 1997; CRLRA 2000, 2001; Shimeld, Curtain & Blight 2001; Kilpatrick, Falk & Johns 2002; Kilpatrick et al. 2002a), and to social and health problems (see, for example, Chavis 1995; Fawcett et al. 1995).

#### *Communities of practice*

Research into communities of practice is relatively recent, first appearing in the early 1990s (see, for example, Lave & Wenger 1991). The concept derives from the knowledge that learning is a process of social participation, that individual and group learning are closely linked, and that learning is closely related to identity because it is a process of transformation (Wenger 1998). This is similar to the material on team effectiveness reviewed in Section Two, that derives from a

similar base (see, for example, Senge et al. 1999; Hackman 2002). Specifically, communities of practice are structures that focus on building social capital to enhance individual and group learning (Kilpatrick & Vanclay forthcoming), and for this reason, they are particularly relevant to the current study.

Communities of practice can describe a wide variety of groups or 'communities', such as families, classrooms of students, and community and civic groups (Wenger 1998). They have also been found to exist within organisations, although they differ from work groups or teams that form part of the formal organisational structure, because of their specific focus on the developmental aspects of people working together. In short, communities of practice refer to the informal relationships between groups of people who 'share a common interest and passion, and who continually interact' (Young & Mitchell 2003, p. 1). This common interest or passion, or what Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) identify as domain of knowledge, is one of three characteristics that define a community of practice. The other two characteristics are sense of community (development and use of social capital within the group), and shared practice (the existence of shared language, tools, stories and frameworks, as well as tacit knowledge such as shared thinking style or shared perspective on problem solving).

More recently, however, research has applied Wenger's (1998; see also Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002) concept of communities of practice to a variety of learning partnerships that do have some element of formal structure, including collaborations between vocational education and training (VET) stakeholders (Young & Mitchell 2002), and between groups of farm management businesses involved in a structured program to enhance farm business sustainability (Kilpatrick & Vanclay forthcoming). Again, however, the central feature of these communities of practice is their focus on building social capital within the group to facilitate learning. This research informs the current study and is important in contributing to our understanding of the process of developing and sustaining community partnerships.

The main focus of Kilpatrick and Vanclay's (forthcoming) work was on the community-building element of communities of practice. They found that community is built through a series of sequential stages: acquisition by individuals of self confidence and development of interpersonal and leadership skills; developing shared values and trust by getting to know group members as individuals; accepting that group members are a credible source of support and advice, and commitment to others within the group. Self confidence, trust and commitment to the community were identified earlier in this chapter as also being key elements of social capital (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000).



Turning to the third characteristic—shared practice—which they identify as the least well developed element in many communities of practice, Young and Mitchell (2003) identified a number of strategies to improve professional practice. These included the importance of having a comparable community model to draw ideas from and to stimulate reflection; the need to create ample opportunities such as group forums and workshops within the community for thinking and sharing information, and the use of experts to influence the development of knowledge by the community. Each of these strategies is designed to stimulate group reflection on their practice, which has been identified as a central element of communities of practice (Wenger 1998; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002). This links closely with the notion of reflexivity introduced in Section Two, which is also a key element of team learning (see, for example, Cardno 1999; Schippers, Den Hartog & Koopman 2001; Mulford 2002).

There are strong links between research into communities of practice and social capital, in that both have been identified as central to economic, social and environmental development within communities (Woolcock & Narayan 2000; OECD 2001a; Young & Mitchell 2003; Kilpatrick & Vancley forthcoming). Clearly this has implications for the current study, with its focus on rural community development through school–community partnerships, so the development and characteristics of communities of practice reviewed in this section provide an important foundation to our understanding of the process of community partnership development. Before moving onto to consider the partnership development process, however, it is necessary to overview the literature on definitions and different types of partnerships.

### *Definition and purpose of partnerships*

It is interesting to note that while partnership research, practice and policy is very much to the forefront of educational and community development thinking, the term ‘partnership’ or ‘coalition’ is frequently taken for granted and not always clearly defined in the literature, in much the same way as ‘leadership’ has suffered from lack of definition in the past. Where some definition of the term ‘partnership’ is offered, it includes reference to the following:

- the composition of partnerships (see, for example, Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997 who refer to the ‘tight relationships at the intersection of ... business, government, education and community sectors’ (p. xvi));
- the specific purpose of partnerships (see, for example, Edwards et al. 2000 who see partnerships as creating ‘a capacity to act with regard to a defined objective or set of objectives’ (p. 2)); or

- the long-term nature of the collaboration (see, for example, Schorr 1997, or Chavis 1995 who outlines the ‘shared and long-term commitment ... everybody brings something of value to the table’ (p. 235)).

It would seem that any definition of partnership should contain reference to each of these points. Therefore, for the purposes of this discussion, the following definition of partnerships, that draws on each of the above components, is proposed: *Partnerships are collaborations characterised by the shared and long-term commitment of a diverse group of members to achieving a common goal.* The focus on shared commitment and meeting common goals is similar to the focus of leadership, as discussed earlier, supporting the partnership development process as a leadership process.

The literature identifies two purposes of partnerships: process and outcomes, or what Edwards et al. (2000) refer to as facilitative partnerships and delivery partnerships. This aligns closely with the dual roles and purposes of leadership discussed earlier in this review (see, for example, Wilkinson 1991 and Chrislip & Larson 1994 on collaborative leadership). It also reflects social capital research (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000) that highlights the need for both identity resources to facilitate the process, and knowledge resources to facilitate the outcomes. In reality most partnerships are part facilitative and part delivery, although most tend to have a clear orientation. The extent of the orientation appears to be most often related to external factors, such as the availability of funding. For example, in their study of over 150 rural regeneration partnerships in the United Kingdom over a two-year period, Edwards et al. (2000) found that *delivery partnerships* (that target specific and practical outcomes) are more concerned with issues such as timing and ensuring continuity of resources, because such partnerships are usually funded under particular programs that have a pre-determined and limited lifespan. Evaluations of such partnerships focus on demonstrating efficiency, effectiveness and accountability to the funding body, or what Young and Mitchell (2003) described as ‘management evaluation’. By comparison, *facilitative partnerships* (that focus on discussion and community enablement) are less likely to have a limited lifespan, and are more concerned with broader issues relating to the development of new mechanisms and opportunities for public participation and engagement. In order to fully understand the importance of the facilitative role of partnerships, Young and Mitchell (2003) recommended that participative, rather than management, evaluation be undertaken. In their study of a number of different communities of practice in the VET arena, they used participative evaluation ‘to illuminate the processes and settings for the participants in the projects, in order to optimize the possible benefits for the organizations undertaking the projects’ (Young & Mitchell 2003, p. 4).

The distinction between delivery and facilitative partnerships, and the different focus and motivation of each, is echoed in research by Cumming (1992) on school–community partnerships. Cumming distinguished between *common pathways* (short-term activities focused on one curriculum area, such as a one-off environmental project designed to revegetate an identified local area) and *flexible pathways* (long-term linkages which focus on developing broader skills in communication, problem solving and interpersonal skills, exemplified by a structured workplace learning program). Regardless of the partnership type, Edwards et al. (2000) argued that all partnerships tend to identify three categories of aims and objectives—output aims, strategic aims, and process aims—but that most emphasise the first two because these reflect the reason why the partnership has secured funding. The authors went on to caution that greater attention should be paid to process aims (that is, to building social capital), as these describe why the partnership has been adopted and the expected benefits of the partnership. This view is strongly supported by other researchers, including Wilkinson (1991), Chrislip and Larson (1994) and Lane and Dorfman (1997).

### *The partnership development process*

A number of researchers have conceptualised the process of developing a community partnership in terms of a lifecycle, moving from a looser, informal structure in the earlier stages, to a more formalised structure in the later planning and delivery stages (see, for example, Kearns, Murphy & Villiers 1996; Lane & Dorfman 1997; Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997; Shimeld 2001a,; Kilpatrick, Falk & Johns 2002; Kilpatrick et al. 2002a & b; Falk & Smith 2003). These studies reflect similarities with the stages of group formation (see Tuckman 1965; Mulford et al. 1981) discussed earlier. There is some variation amongst researchers regarding the number of stages in the lifecycle, and the characteristics of each stage. For example, following a review of industry education partnerships, Kearns, Murphy and Villiers (1996) identified three broad stages of the partnership lifecycle—start-up, development, and mature—in line with the OECD/CERI (1992) model. On the other hand, community development researchers such as Lane and Dorfman (1997) believed that the early (start-up) stage should be broken down into a number of sub stages, and proposed a seven-stage model for the development of partnerships. This focus on the importance of highlighting the discrete stages early in the process of partnership development would seem to reflect group formation theory (Tuckman 1965; Mulford et al. 1981; Mulford 2002), which identified three stages, forming, storming and norming, before the development (or performing) stage.

Table 1 represents a synthesis of findings from the research into stages of partnership development. Broadly it indicates that the partnership development process comprises four phases, each comprised of one or more individual stages.

Phase one includes awareness of a problem or opportunity (the trigger), as well as a number of initiating or pre-partnership activities. What characterises this stage of leadership is its relative informality, particularly early in the phase, as relationships are established. During this phase like-minded people are contacted, stakeholders identified and a support base for the change is gradually built. This phase is closely linked to the first of Fawcett et al's (1995) enabling activities for facilitating the process of community empowerment—enhancing experience and competence. As relationships develop throughout phase one there is sufficient trust and confidence amongst members to begin to develop a shared purpose and vision, suggesting this is the first stage in transferring leadership from a number of individuals to the group. The process of developing and agreeing upon a shared vision has been identified as a key initial activity in partnership formation (Lane & Dorfman 1997; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b; James & St. Leger 2003). Research indicates shared goals and vision are built upon later in phase one, or early in phase two (Kilpatrick, Falk & Johns 2002; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b). In phase one, some researchers (for example, Lane & Dorfman 1997; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b) indicated that early attention is given to management of the partnership, in terms of early identification of resources available, whereas others (Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997) suggested this happens during phase two.

Phase two of the partnership lifecycle is described by various researchers as development (Kearns, Murphy & Villiers 1996; Lane & Dorfman 1997; Falk & Smith 2003; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b), implementation (Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997), or fledgling (Shimeld 2001a). As partnerships enter phase two they are characterised by a shift to more formalised relationships between stakeholders, including the establishment of roles and responsibilities, and a set of processes for interaction and collaboration that the group has developed. This phase aligns with Fawcett et al's (1995) second and third enabling activities for facilitating community empowerment—enhancing group structure and capacity; and removing social and environmental barriers. At this stage there is increased awareness of and commitment to the shared vision (Lane & Dorfman 1997; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b). Several researchers (Lane & Dorfman 1997; Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997) indicated that phase two is characterised by the entry of new players (leaders), whose job is to operationalise the partnership. During phase two, management

**Table 1: Synthesis of research on stages of partnership development**

	Kearns et al. 1996	Lane & Dorfman 1997	Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997	Shimeid 2001a	Falk & Smith 2003	Kilpatrick et al. 2002b
Phase One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate</li> <li>• Identify collaborative leader</li> <li>• Build collaboration</li> <li>• Develop shared vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiation</li> <li>• Incubation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-partnership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trigger</li> <li>• Initiating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trigger</li> <li>• Initiation</li> </ul>
Phase Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop action plan</li> <li>• Initiate collaborative action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fledgling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developmental</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development</li> </ul>
Phase Three	—	—	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First mature</li> </ul>	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance</li> </ul>
Phase Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renew/review vision and goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement and renewal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enterprising</li> <li>• Second mature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability</li> </ul>

structures are developed, objectives set and a plan to achieve the objectives developed, and reporting processes agreed upon. By the end of the phase, the proposed change has been implemented. As noted earlier in this chapter, some researchers (see, for example, Pigg 1996) would describe this stage as moving more towards management because of its focus on implementation and getting the job done. It seems likely that towards the end of this stage, the process may have entered more of a management phase.

Phase three is the stage at which the partnership is recognised as effective. The processes and resources put in place during the previous phase have allowed the partnership to realise some substantial outcomes—in short, things are running smoothly. It is important to note that this phase only specifically identified as a separate phase in two of the research projects reviewed. Shimeld (2001a) referred to this as the first mature stage of the partnership, while Kilpatrick et al. (2002b), referred to it as maintenance. While Falk and Smith (2003) don't include this as a separate phase of collaborative leadership development, it should be noted that they incorporate some of its characteristics into their later sustainability stage. The fact that phase three has been identified by at least two researchers as an integral part of the partnership development process suggests that further investigation of this phase is warranted. As Cumming (1992) and Shimeld (2001a) noted, some partnerships do not consider progression beyond this phase to be necessary. Cumming (1992) cautioned that learning is reduced if partnerships do not progress beyond this phase, because much of the 'real' learning occurs during earlier phases where risks are taken and mistakes are made. He was particularly concerned about this limitation to learning, for students who enter school–community programs that have been in the maintenance phase for some time. It would seem, therefore, that further research is needed into what happens during the maintenance phase to facilitate progression to the fourth phase.

Phase four includes stages that researchers have variously described as mature (Kearns, Murphy & Villiers 1996), enterprising (Shimeld 2001a), sustainability (Falk & Smith 2003; Kikpatrick et al. 2002b), or renewal (Lane & Dorfman 1997; Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997). This phase refers to a broadening of focus beyond the original purpose and objectives of the partnership. During this phase, the social capital that has been built during earlier phases gives rise to increased opportunities for collective action. Typical activities during this phase include a review of the original vision, goals and partnership processes, scanning the horizon for new opportunities or problems, and continued risk taking. This phase is similar to Fawcett et al's (1995) fourth enabling activity for facilitating community empowerment—enhancing environmental support and resources. During this phase Shimeld (2001a) noted that it is not uncommon to involve new stakeholders from previously unrepresented groups. She conceived of this phase as two separate

stages—enterprising and second mature. These stages describe, respectively, further development of the original partnership, and then the extent to which partnership activity has become embedded within the community. Henton, Melville and Walesh (1997) also indicated this dual focus in their improvement and renewal stage. For most other researchers the dual focus is implied in their sustainability (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b; Falk & Smith 2003), renewal (Lane & Dorfman 1997) and mature (Kearns, Murphy & Villiers 1996) stages.

Most researchers conceive of the partnership development process as being cyclical rather than linear, in that the knowledge gained through partnership development is then fed back into subsequent partnership development processes (see, for example, Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b; Falk & Smith 2003). In addition, more recent models have refined the cyclical nature of this continuous learning process by conceiving of the partnership model as an outward spiral, to reflect the way that subsequent partnership cycles build on, but do not replicate, earlier cycles (see, for example, Shimeld 2001b, and Falk & Smith 2003).

Kilpatrick et al.'s (2002b) five-stage model of partnership development draws together the research on partnership development stages and informs the current study. Their model is reproduced in Figure 2. While research indicates that all partnerships go through these different stages of development, Henton, Melville and Walesh (1997) and Kilpatrick et al. (2002b) concluded that partnerships differ in terms of the scope, timing and success of each stage. This finding is supported by Shimeld (2001a), who also noted that different factors trigger the transition from one stage to the next in different partnerships, although she didn't elaborate further on this. In particular, recent research by Kilpatrick et al. (2002b) identified the level of maturity of the partnership as one of the key influencing factors in determining the extent and rate of partnership development.

### **What leadership roles are necessary for the development of school–community partnerships, and what leadership characteristics and attributes are associated with each of these roles?**

Research on team development and team roles provides useful background to an understanding of leadership roles necessary for partnership development. The literature on team formation within organisations identifies a number of roles that team members develop informally according to their temperament and skills, which 'need to be present to give the team a balanced performance' (Latimore & Crawford 1988, p. 13). These roles are in addition to their formal leadership roles within the team. Roles are characterised by two dimensions: scope of interest (broad concepts or attention to detail), and orientation (social focus or output focus), as summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2: Team role dimensions**

Dimension	Team role
<b>Scope of interest</b>	
Broad concepts	Thinker Challenger
Attention to detail	Checker Planner
<b>Orientation</b>	
Social focus	Humaniser Harmoniser
Output focus	Driver Performer

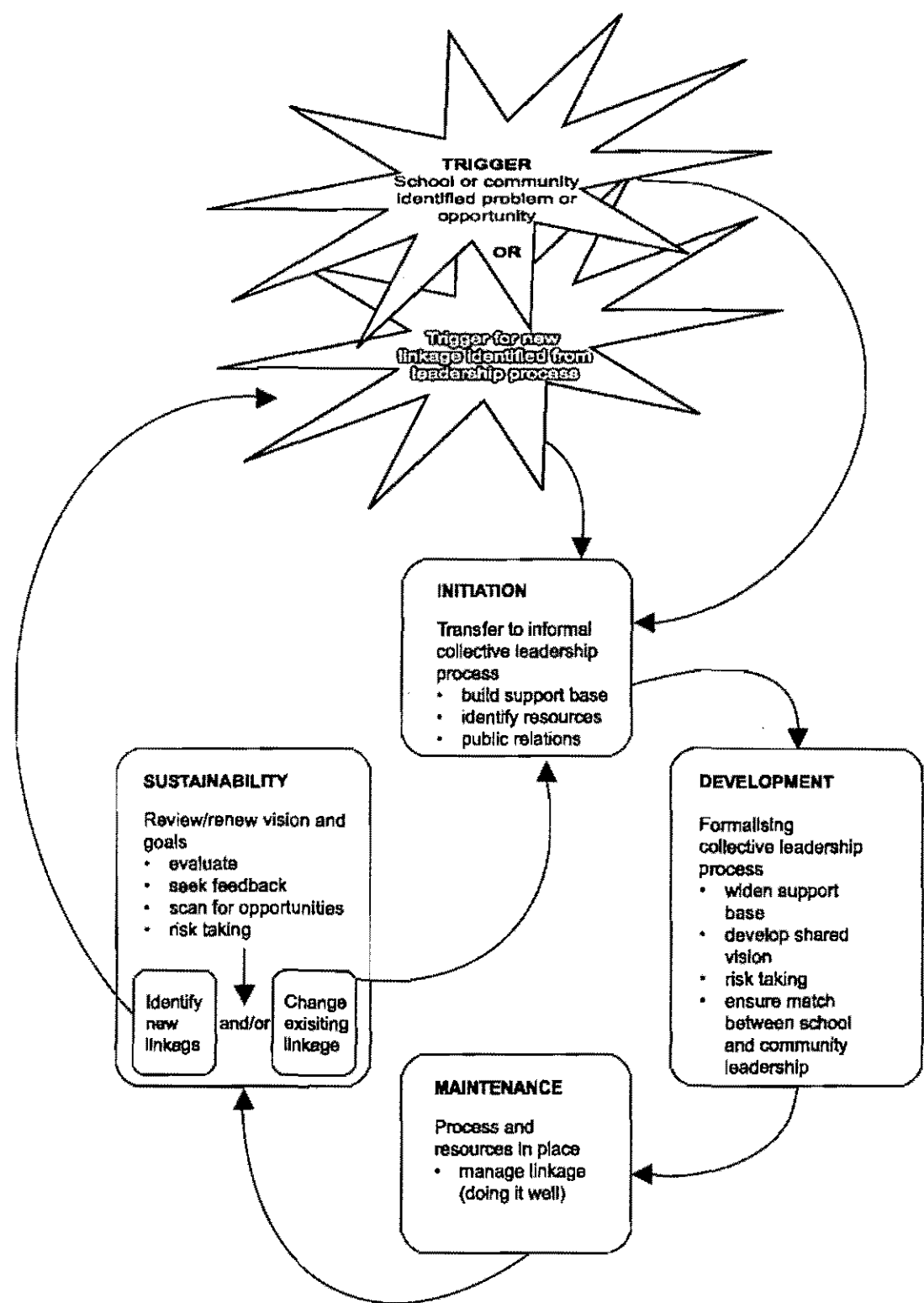
Source: Latemore, G. & Crawford, B. 1988, *People Working Together. Conceptual frameworks and applications for organisations and teams*, Occasional Paper No. 1. AITD, Brisbane, pp. 13–15.

There appear to be links between the eight team roles identified by Latemore and Crawford, and the nine personality styles of the enneagram, an increasingly popular tool used by psychologists and human resource consultants to increase people's understanding of themselves and their relationships, both within the workplace and beyond. The nine styles are perfectionist, helper, achiever, artist, observer, troubleshooter, visionary, boss, and mediator. A number of websites contain information on the nine enneagram styles; see, for example, Michael Goldberg's website <http://www.9waysofworking.com/QeNNEAintro2.html> [accessed 28 March 2003].

Related to previous discussion on the developmental stages of work groups and partnerships, organisational learning (Bass 2000) and partnership development (Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997) literature indicates that different leadership roles are needed at different stages of the process, and that a number of specific functions is associated with each of these leadership roles. At the first stage individuals who are 'ideas' people are needed to initiate the partnership; what Bass describes as animators and creators, and Henton, Melville and Walesh as motivators. People who can connect with others in the community—networkers—(Henton, Melville & Walesh) are also important at this stage. As the partnership development process moves beyond initiation to incubation, Henton, Melville and Walesh note that leaders are needed to fill the roles of teacher (provider of information; facilitator of a shared framework for thinking about the community and its needs) and convenor (creator of a process for fair and effective decisionmaking). The third stage, partnership implementation, calls for what Henton, Melville and Walesh term integrators



Figure 2: Implementing school–community partnerships: Stages of the leadership process



Source: Kilpatrick, S., Johns, S., Mulford, B., Falk, I. & Prescott, L. 2002, *More than an Education: Leadership for rural school–community partnerships*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Barton, Australian Capital Territory, p. 98.

(coordinators of the partnership responsible for locating resources and implementing the partnership) as well as drivers (those who set partnership goals and facilitate the partnership to reach measurable objectives). As the partnership enters the fourth stage, that of improvement and renewal, leaders are needed to occupy the role of mentor (Henton, Melville & Walesh) or what Bass terms sustainer, to ensure provision is made for the community to continue to work together. Henton, Melville and Walesh identify a second leadership role at this stage—agitator—that focuses on actively encouraging others to scan the horizon for new issues and trends.

The link between leadership roles and stage of group/partnership development is summarised in Table 3, using the stages of partnership development identified by Henton, Melville and Walesh (1997).

**Table 3: Leadership roles and stages of group/partnership development**

Stage of partnership development	Leadership role
<b>Stage One</b> Partnership initiation	Animator (Bass) Creator (Bass) Motivator (Henton et al.) Networker (Henton et al.)
<b>Stage Two:</b> Partnership incubation	Teacher (Henton et al.) Convenor (Henton et al.)
<b>Stage Three</b> Partnership implementation	Integrator (Henton et al.) Driver (Henton et al.)
<b>Stage Four:</b> Partnership sustainability and renewal	Sustainer (Bass) Mentor (Bass and Henton et al.) Agitator (for change) (Bass and Henton et al.)

Source: This table is synthesised from material presented in Bass, B. 2000, 'The future of leadership in learning organizations', *Journal of Leadership Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 18–38, and Henton, D., Melville, J. & Walesh, K. 1997, *Grassroots Leaders for a New Economy: How civic entrepreneurs are building prosperous communities*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

As Henton, Melville and Walesh (1997) conclude, it seems unlikely one person would be skilled in all these roles, hence the need for leadership from a range of sources, including those in formal leadership positions and a variety of other informal leaders. This also supports findings from the community leadership literature reviewed in Section Two (see, for example, Raftery 1993; Chrislip & Larson 1994; Langone & Rohs 1995). In particular, recent research indicates that partnerships are more likely to be successful if they match the particular skills of available leaders, to the leadership roles required at different stages of the partnership development process (Kilpatrick & Loechel forthcoming). Specifically, this research found that partnership that draw on leadership from a variety of sources within and external to the school and community, are less

likely to suffer the negative consequences of leadership burnout or lack of leadership continuity, therefore increasing the likelihood of partnership sustainability.

For example, school principals have been found to play a key leadership role particularly in terms of initiating and sustaining school–community partnerships (Bowie 1998; Malley, Frigo & Robinson 1999; Kilpatrick, Bell & Kilpatrick 2001; Schneyder 2002). There is evidence to suggest that partnerships that are not strongly supported by the principal are likely to fail (see, for example, Cumming 1992; Jackson et al. 1994; Street 1997), suggesting the importance of the principals' legitimising role. However, as Cumming (1992) noted, the principals' level of support and involvement changed over time. They were actively involved in initiating school–community partnerships by providing resources, and raising school and community awareness of the rationale and intended outcomes of the activity. Following this stage, however, they withdrew from a visible hands-on role so as not to be seen dominating the direction of the activity.

While the principal plays a central role in legitimising and supporting school–community partnerships, research also indicates the critical role of other school staff in determining the sustainability of such partnerships (see, for example, Bowie 1998; Johns et al. 2000b & c, 2001). In particular, such research noted the importance of staff in rural schools having an understanding of the community in which their school is located, and suggested that such an understanding is likely to be built in several ways, including through induction programs and school cluster support, and through professional development activities (Bowie 1998). Commenting specifically on teachers involved in VET in schools programs in rural Tasmania, Kilpatrick, Bell and Kilpatrick (2001) also called for staff professional development in relation to network building and workplace communication skills.

Research has identified project coordinators as key players in the leadership process for school–community partnerships (Cumming 1992; Kilpatrick, Bell & Kilpatrick 2001). Those in charge of coordinating specific school–community partnerships (for example, VET in schools coordinators) played a significant brokering role in the implementation and maintenance of those linkages (James & St. Leger 2003), although the complexity and heavy workload associated with coordination of VET in schools partnerships, for example, has been found to contribute to relatively high rates of stress and burnout (Frost 2000). Cumming (1992) noted a number of characteristics common to coordinators, including openness to new ideas, good communication and persuasion skills, good people skills, and the ability to critically reflect on effective teaching and learning strategies. He also noted that coordinators typically engaged in network building activities, and because of their involvement in a number of overlapping activities in relation to

education, training and community affairs, were able to move freely across school and community boundaries. Supporting this finding, is research into whole-of-government approaches to community development by Wilkinson and Applebee (1999), which focused on the key role played by mediators or brokers, who support local partnerships. Their roles are similar to those of project coordinators, in terms of facilitating the exchange of knowledge, building networks across boundaries, and facilitating joint learning.

Sorensen and Epps (1996) noted community leaders may be drawn from a variety of institutional groups including business and industry, local government, and church groups, linking with later research by Stone and Hughes (2001) on the importance to rural community development of forging linkages with these groups—that is, in building linking social capital. Researching the impact of community leaders on school–community partnerships, Cumming (1992) highlighted the need for schools to form linkages with the business sector, identifying that school–business collaborations must be supported at both a managerial and organisational level within the school and community. Cumming also identified factors that support school–community collaboration, most notably, the formation of a management committee comprising representatives drawn from all sectors of the community. Other research (for example, Mitchell 1998) highlighted the importance of local government linkages within rural communities, identifying that financial and other support from the local/shire council is a critical but often overlooked factor contributing to the development of effective school–community partnerships. These findings are supported by recent research by Kilpatrick and Loechel (forthcoming) that identified two key sources of social capital building in rural communities: local institutions (for example, local government and educational institutions) and external agents (for example, regional Universities, State government departments). Their findings align with earlier research that identified facilitators from outside the school as essential to effective school–community partnerships, in terms of triggering and sustaining the change process (Jackson et al. 1994), although it should be noted that Jackson et al.’s research related to the development of home–school partnerships in urban public schools in New York, rather than in rural schools. Specifically, external facilitators provide resources, ensuring administrative tasks are done and facilitating communication throughout the process. Jackson et al. (1994) noted that external facilitators have the potential to change group dynamics because they are not bound by school structure, and can encourage individuals to take on new leadership roles.

The other group of players in school–community partnerships is students. Their role is identified as a vital one, linking with community development literature that identifies the central role of youth in community development initiatives (Kenyon & Black 2001). This finding supports

research by Jackson et al. (1994), who noted the central role of students who often acted as the link between school and family, concluding that student involvement in partnerships needed to be more fully developed, particularly in terms of their involvement in program planning and evaluation.

### **What other factors influence school–community partnerships and what are the impacts of this influence?**

A number of researchers have investigated and categorised the factors that influence partnership development (see, for example, Edwards et al. 2000; Purdue et al. 2000; Shimeld 2001a; Falk & Smith 2003). What this research has in common is its categorisation of influencing factors into three broad dimensions: individual, internal, and external. Some (see, for example, Purdue et al. 2000) identify a fourth dimension, which they describe as community and neighbourhood, although in Falk and Smith's (2003) work, this category is subsumed by external influences.

#### *Individual domain*

The individual domain (Falk & Smith 2003) refers to the specific attributes of those involved in the leadership process. These include individual character attributes such as consistency, ethics, integrity and control, as well as levels of initiative, innovation and risk taking (Falk & Smith 2003), and the ability of leaders to take advantage of political opportunities and use their community networks (Purdue et al. 2000; Falk & Smith 2003). In short, the individual domain aligns with the identity and knowledge resources that individuals bring to the partnership, which Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) have identified as the building blocks of social capital.

#### *Internal domain*

The internal dimension relates to issues of distribution of power and levels of trust within the partnership, and within parties to the partnership, as reflected in their organisational structures, rules and interpersonal relationships. It also relates to the culture of the school and other stakeholder organisations. Research suggests a clear link between internal organisational roles and responsibilities within the partnership and the extent to which partnerships embody collaborative leadership. For example, Purdue et al. (2000) found that collaborative leadership is enhanced and leaders empowered when levels of trust within the partnership are high, and when working practices and culture reflect equality rather than power, and openness rather than secrecy. Trust and mutual respect are also identified by a number of other researchers as being at the centre of effective partnerships, by facilitating collaboration rather than competition (see, for example, Schorr 1997; Edwards et al. 2000; CRLRA 2000, 2001; James & St. Leger 2003). This supports Lane and Dorfman's (1997) earlier research on the positive relationship between peer-

based power structures and collaborative leadership, and also supports the team/group effectiveness literature reviewed earlier (see, for example, Cardno 1999; Schippers, Den Hartog & Koopman 2001; Hackman 2002; Mulford 2002; Silins & Mulford 2002). In particular, the element of trust is central to the building of social capital (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000). On the other hand, collaborative leadership is negatively affected when trust is low and working practices and culture deny decisionmaking power to certain leaders, who feel excluded from the process. On the issue of culture more generally, research into effective partnerships between urban public schools and low income parents (Jackson et al. 1994) found that collaboration needs to be integral to school culture rather than an add on 'to the basically bureaucratic and hierarchical patterns of school organization' (p. 46). These researchers also identified the key role of school principals in developing a collaborative school culture.

### *External domain*

The external environment refers essentially to policy—that is, permission and/or resources which determine the sustainability of partnerships (Miller 1995). This aligns closely with linking social capital or institutional trust (Woolcock 1999; Stone & Hughes 2001) which is central to the development of school–community partnerships. A number of studies highlight the influence of permission and resourcing to the formation, development and sustainability of partnerships. For example, in their study of a number of communities of practice representing VET stakeholder collaborations, Young and Mitchell (2003) concluded that effective delivery of VET was linked to the development of communities of practice, and to support of these communities at an organisational level. The issue of support for communities of practice was furthered by Kilpatrick and Vancley (forthcoming) who drew 'the attention of policy makers to the finding that formal structures (rather than chance informal encounters) that are flexible and have planned space for informal interaction are more likely to provide the opportunities of interaction for building social capital'. On a more specific note, Edwards et al. (2000) identified that tight funding submission deadlines allow insufficient time to initiate partnerships and seek input from communities, meaning that partnerships often have to be built after funding has been received. Linked to this are the studies that focus on the impacts of policy and funding on continuity of partnership personnel and sustainability of partnerships, indicating that continuity of personnel is a key contributor to partnership sustainability (see, for example, Barr 1997; Bowie 1998; Malley, Frigo & Robinson 1999; Johns et al. 2000a; CRLRA 2000, 2001; Kilpatrick, Bell & Kilpatrick 2001; McSwan, Clinch & Store 2001; James & St. Leger 2003).

### *The link between individual, internal and external domains*

Of particular interest, is the relationship between the individual, internal and external factors, and a number of researchers have investigated this issue (see, for example, Edwards et al. 2000; Purdue et al. 2000; Shimeld 2001a; Falk & Smith 2003). Edwards et al. (2000) reported that many of the communities in their study of rural regeneration partnerships in the United Kingdom, recognised the need to blend both top down (statutory involvement) and bottom up (community involvement) approaches, so as to combine local work with wider strategic thinking. In other examples, Schorr (1997), writing on school–community partnerships in inner city neighbourhoods in North America, and James and St. Leger (2003), writing on VET in schools partnerships for students at risk of leaving school early, acknowledged the interrelationship between internal and external contexts when they stated that successful school–community linkages cannot be implemented in a top–down fashion but must reflect and respond to community needs. At the same time such partnerships draw extensively on outside resources for funding, technical expertise and to influence policy.

Relevant to the current discussion is research by Purdue et al. (2000) and also Edwards et al. (2000), who conceived of the relationship between individual, internal and external factors in terms of a series of interrelated cogs, each of which is an important change driver which can work with or against the others. As the researchers note, there are imbalances of power between the drivers, in that the external policy environment and internal institutional arrangements impact more strongly on partnership arrangements than individual leader attributes. For example, Edwards et al. (2000) found that cross-sectoral representation and full participation by all partners can be limited depending on the dominance of funding and other statutory bodies. They also noted there can be friction between the external (policy) and internal (partnership institutional arrangement) drivers, in cases where a policy direction attempts to modify or change local power structures within a community.

There is evidence to suggest that effective partnerships are able to, and indeed must find ways to, work around or resolve issues relating to conflicts between internal and external dimensions (see, for example, Miller 1995; Schorr 1997; Malley, Frigo & Robinson 1999; Falk & Smith 2003; James & St. Leger 2003). This can be done by influencing policy development (Miller 1995) and by rule ‘bending’ (Schorr 1997). For example, Miller (1995) identified a number of strategies for developing policy support, including building a community coalition to demonstrate widespread support for the initiative, and educating public officials. Referring to the restricting influence of policy on school–community partnerships, Schorr (1997, p. 18) described how effective partnerships have bent the rules in order to address the ‘mismatch between the attributes of

effective programs and the [policy] imperatives of prevailing systems' (p. 18). However, not all partnerships have this ability, and Purdue et al. (2000) concluded that the present imbalance between partnership drivers needs to be redressed, by strengthening community leadership and increasing levels of trust between parties to the partnership. This would address the dichotomy that 'partnerships require trust, but often depend on power ... and on those who hold it' (Purdue et al. 2000, p. 44). This issue is particularly relevant for school–community partnerships involving Indigenous people. As Schwab and Sutherland (2001) noted, while Australian policy initiatives such as the Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness (ASSPA) program facilitate the formation of relationships between school and community, they do not necessarily 'develop a sense of empowerment by which participants feel valued and equal—feel that they are being heard and can make a difference' (p. 7).

### *Other influencing factors*

In addition to the individual, internal and external dimensions influencing partnerships, the literature identifies a number of other factors that influence partnership development and sustainability. For example, in terms of school–community partnerships, influencing factors include the size of the school (Combs & Bailey 1992; Jolly & Deloney 1996; Hammer 2001), size of the community and proximity of the school to the community (Combs & Bailey 1992), the number of parties involved in the partnership (Sammons et al. 2002), the level of readiness of parties such as Indigenous groups to work collaboratively (Boston 1999), and the importance of public relations (Carlsmith & Railsback 2001). On the subject of school size, for example, Hammer (2001) cited studies that have shown higher rates of student participation in extra curricular activities in small rural schools, linking this directly to engagement in community activities in later life.

Kilpatrick et al. (2002b) found school public relations to be a key influencing factor during phase one of the partnership process, although it would seem to be integral to later stages of the process as well. This is because

[modern day] school public relations is less about conveying information than it is about establishing and promoting partnerships within the community. An effective school public relations plan provides value by giving people information they can use, not just information that the school needs to convey about process. Effective public relations means schools ask for and receive information just as much as they transmit it (Carlsmith & Railsback 2001, p. 7).

School public relations comprises a variety of activities which focus on interaction and engagement between school and community, and help to build social capital. Activities include



promoting community input, anticipating image problems and providing solutions, designing all levels of communications, conducting public relations research, and training employees in the importance of public relations (Carlsmith & Railsback 2001).

The literature suggests that an effective and widely-communicated public relations strategy is central to successful school–community partnerships (see, for example, Combs & Bailey 1992; Carlsmith & Railsback 2001). Effective public relations programs are supported by an open and collegial school culture. Characteristics include the commitment and involvement of all school staff members in public relations; the school’s physical appearance which should be open, helpful and friendly; use of a number of different communication sources including a web site, newsletters and press releases; encouragement and support for parental participation, and constant outreach efforts to those not normally involved with schools, such as businesses or community members who no longer have school (Carlsmith & Railsback 2001).

Community development research (Edwards et al. 2000) has also found the socioeconomic profile of a community to be an influencing factor in partnership development and effectiveness, in that villages around university towns and those with a high proportion of active retirees are more likely to initiate and sustain partnerships than more remote agricultural communities. Related to this is educational research that distinguishes the role of principals in high and low socioeconomic status (SES) schools, in terms of their school–community partnership activity (Hallinger & Murphy 1986). The researchers found that principals in high SES schools were more likely than principals in low SES schools to act as ‘boundary spanners’ by seeking opportunities to involve community members in the school. Other characteristics of communities with a predisposition to partnership activity include those communities to which people have moved for lifestyle reasons, which tend to generate more partnership activity than communities to which people have moved for a quiet life (Edwards et al. 2000).

## **Conclusion**

The future direction of leadership research and theory depends largely on our understanding of the purpose of leadership. If leadership is conceived as a way of facilitating people to meet predetermined goals and outcomes, as has been the focus of a good deal of leadership research in the past, then the new paradigm of leadership as a process is unlikely to be well accepted or understood. However, if the overarching goal of leadership is to facilitate collective learning and problem-solving, that is, to build social capital through which mutual goals and outcomes are determined and realised, then partnerships and other collaborative leadership models would seem

to offer a foundation on which to further build leadership theory and practice relevant to rural schools and their communities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Leadership by visionary teams would seem to offer more possibilities than leadership by an individual, as schools, communities and societies develop leadership processes to deal with the 'swampy ground' or complex and rapidly changing issues and problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This review of the literature clearly indicates that leadership for effective school–community partnerships draws heavily on collaborative models of leadership, incorporating theory and research in the areas of group/team formation and effectiveness, educational and community development partnerships, as well as less formal structures such as communities of practice. It also provides evidence to show that effective school–community partnerships do not come about by chance, but through a purposeful leadership process, which allows school and community to learn together, as they gradually develop and enact a vision which represents their collective needs and collective future. As schools and communities learn together, social capital is created and used, resulting in increased individual and community capacity. This leads to the conclusion that the school, in partnership with the wider community, is in a powerful position to actively and consciously contribute to and shape the development of community social capital in ways not previously considered.

Using a case study approach (described in Chapter 3), this study will investigate how the process of developing and sustaining school–community partnerships is integral to community development in five different Australian rural communities.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

As noted in Chapter 1, with the permission of the funding body, the current study uses data collected from an earlier study funded by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC). The original project was managed by the writer. Much of the material in this chapter is therefore related to a discussion and justification of the research design for the original study, for which the writer had responsibility. At certain stages during this chapter, however, there is discussion of methodological issues relating specifically to the current study. To avoid confusion, the term 'current study' will be used in those sections.

In designing the study, the key focus was on exploring the way in which school and community leadership processes influence the role of schools in rural community development. In order to explore this phenomenon, decisions needed to be made regarding the strategy of inquiry, data collection and analysis methods, and report writing (Creswell 1998; Denzin & Lincoln 2000). It was determined that a qualitative approach, utilising a case study inquiry strategy, would be most appropriate. An explanation of, and justification for, this approach is provided in the following section. Site and interviewee selection procedures are then documented in detail, along with data collection procedures. The chapter then describes data analysis techniques, and the use of community meetings to triangulate findings. Details regarding the format of individual case study reports, as well as cross-case analysis techniques, are presented next. Chapter 3 concludes with limitations of the study.

### Research design

#### Why use a qualitative approach?

Much has been written on the relative strengths and weaknesses of quantitative vs qualitative approaches (see, for example, Stake 1995; Burns 2000; Denzin & Lincoln 2000). The more

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<sup>1</sup> Approximately 25% of the material presented in this chapter, including the tables, was written by Susan Johns for inclusion in Chapter 3 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b). The significant difference is that material on the following topics is new: qualitative research; case study strategy of inquiry; verification procedures; the case studies and cross-case analysis; and limitations of the study. Material on data collection and data analysis has been expanded and developed. Co-authors of the final report, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Professor Bill Mulford and Ms Libby Prescott, all from the University of Tasmania, and Professor Ian Falk from the Northern Territory University, attest to the fact that Susan Johns is the sole author of all material in this chapter.

recent literature argues strongly that both approaches have a place in educational and social sciences research, and that a combination of approaches is both legitimate and appropriate for some research projects. The strengths of quantitative approaches, it is argued, are reliable measurement, control through sampling, and manipulation of variables to determine cause and effect (Burns 2000; Denzin & Lincoln 2000). Qualitative approaches, on the other hand, allow for holistic analyses of a particular phenomenon, focusing specifically on entities, processes and meanings (Patton 1990; Burns 2000).

The focus of the study was on the process of developing school–community partnerships and the way in which that process builds community social capital, hence a qualitative approach was selected, in accordance with Patton (1990) and Burns (2000). Creswell (1998) stated that qualitative research is the preferred approach for ‘how’ or ‘what’ questions, whilst ‘why’ questions are best answered using a quantitative or scientific approach. The research questions for both the original and current study (see Chapter 1) were all of a ‘how’ or ‘what’ nature, further justifying a qualitative approach.

A qualitative approach is recommended where the purpose of the research is to inform program development or improvement (Patton 1990). This is relevant to the study, as it is intended that findings will inform the development of school–community partnerships in other rural communities. Other reasons for selecting a qualitative approach include the need to explore school–community partnerships in the natural context in which they occur. Such an approach, which Lincoln and Guba (1985) described as naturalistic inquiry, focuses on the perspectives of the participants involved in the partnerships, rather than trying to determine an objective truth regarding partnership development.

In short, it was determined that the best way to explore the process of developing school–community partnerships was from an insiders’ view (Patton 1990; Burns 2000). This is consistent with Burns (2000) who identified the need for educational and social sciences research, in particular, to take into account the ability of individuals to interpret their experiences and construct meanings from these. According to Burns (2000) and other research methodologists such as Creswell (1998) and Denzin and Lincoln (2000), the focus on context and on researching ‘the qualities of social and educational interaction ... [in order to understand the] multiple realities and socially constructed meanings that exist within every social context’ (Burns 2000, pp. 12 & 13), are key strengths of qualitative research, and set it apart from quantitative approaches.

## **Case study as a strategy of inquiry**

Qualitative researchers have a number of different inquiry strategies at their disposal, some of the most common of which are case study, ethnography, grounded theory, and action research (Creswell 1998; Burns 2000; Denzin & Lincoln 2000). Recognising that '[a] case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry' (Stake 2000, p. 346), the study employed a case study strategy using multi-site, multi-method techniques to investigate the multiplicity of ways in which rural schools contribute to their communities, and to investigate the complex relationship between leadership processes as school and community work together. Case studies are appropriate when the phenomena being studied represent an entity bounded in time and place (Creswell 1998)—in this case, five rural schools and their community partnerships. Case studies are also particularly useful when the researcher wants to understand a particular group of people, or problem or situation in some depth (Patton 1990). Like qualitative research in general, case studies focus on process rather than outcomes, and on discovery rather than confirmation (Burns 2000). The process of developing school–community partnerships in rural areas is one that has not been fully explored (see Chapter 2), further justifying the use of a case study strategy of inquiry.

Case studies have been described by Stake (1995; 2000) as intrinsic (the focus is on the case itself), instrumental (the focus is on a specific issue), and collective (a number of cases that investigate a particular phenomenon). Case studies presented in this study are collective, in that they allow us to understand the phenomenon of school–community partnerships more fully by presenting in-depth investigations of partnerships within five different sites (Stake 1995). A collective case study strategy is considered appropriate 'because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases' (Stake 2000, p. 437). Burns (2000) concurred, when he noted that multi case studies have the advantage of providing more compelling evidence than a single case study.

Consistent with qualitative research approaches in general (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1992; Denzin & Lincoln 2000), and with case study in particular (Burns 2000), a non probability sampling strategy was employed. Specifically, the study used purposive sampling to actively target settings and individuals in which the process of effective school–community partnership development was most likely to occur. One reason for this was because the large amount of resources required for the case study method meant that the researchers and funding body needed some assurance that the sample would yield useful data (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1992). Burns (2000) described four types of purposive sampling: typical, extreme, reputational, and convenient. The study utilised a reputational purposive sampling strategy, in that cases were

chosen on the recommendation of experts in rural education and school–community partnerships, in accordance with a number of selection criteria (see ‘Site selection’). Interviewee selection was informed by key informants in the sites (usually the principal in consultation with other school staff such as the VET coordinator). Theoretical sampling was also used to select additional interviewees, when more evidence was needed to clarify the emerging theory (Charmaz 2000). Sometimes this also took the form of re-interviewing selected participants to further explore issues that emerged as being significant during the course of the interviews. Specifically, principals and VET coordinators in most sites were interviewed more than once, the purpose being to ‘refine ideas, not to increase the size of the original sample’ (Charmaz 2000, p. 519). Further details of site and interviewee selection criteria and procedures are provided later in this chapter.

### **Verifying findings in qualitative research**

A criticism levelled at qualitative research is the difficulty of applying standards of validity and reliability, traditionally associated with scientific or quantitative studies. Case studies in particular are criticised by some researchers because of the subjective bias of the researcher, although, as Burns (2000) pointed out, this criticism can also be levelled at quantitative researchers. Qualitative research methodologists (for example, Creswell 1998; Janesick 2000) question why qualitative research must be made to ‘fit’ quantitative guidelines, given that the two approaches are so different. To this end, they have developed a number of comparable techniques to verify the trustworthiness of research findings: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (see, for example, Lincoln & Guba 1985; Isaac & Michael 1997). The way in which the study addressed each of these issues will be discussed shortly. However, it is first necessary to overview the protocols used by qualitative researchers to avoid misinterpretation, to minimise researcher bias, and to ensure the accuracy of findings. These protocols are collectively described as triangulation.

#### *Triangulation*

Stake (1995) emphasised that in case study research it is difficult to arrive at a consensus as to what really exists, given that multiple realities are the subject matter of qualitative research. At the same time, however, he noted that case study researchers ‘have ethical obligations to minimise misrepresentations and misunderstanding ... to find the validity of data observed’ (Stake 1995, p. 109). A number of factors may contribute to misinterpretation through researcher bias, including data overload in the field (meaning that some important information may be overlooked); the impact of first impressions or of observations of dramatic incidents; selectivity

in using certain data to confirm a key finding, and unreliability of information from some sources (Huberman & Miles 1994).

Recognised forms of triangulation include investigator, theory and methodological triangulation (Denzin 1984, cited in Stake 1995), as well as member checking (Stake 1995; Janesick 2000). The study employed each of these techniques, as discussed below.

*Investigator triangulation* comprised members of the research team comparing their interpretations of the same phenomena (for further details see the later section 'Role of the research team'). Ensuring convergence among researchers includes comparing field notes and observations, and involving at least one other researcher in critically questioning the coding framework (Huberman & Miles 1994; Burns 2000). In this study data were collected, discussed and coded as part of a team structure. This occurred on site in three of the sites, where team members worked together to collect data and undertake initial interpretation. In the remaining two sites, where only one team member had collected data, investigator triangulation occurred when data collectors returned to the university, in the form of debriefing sessions with the writer. Another form of investigator triangulation was also utilised, in accordance with Denzin (1984, cited in Stake 1995), who noted that 'an underused but valuable protocol is to present the observations ... to a panel of researchers or experts to discuss alternative interpretations' (Stake 1995, p. 113). Early in the study a Reference Group was convened, comprising a panel of 'experts' in the field of rural education. These experts came from a variety of fields, and included representatives from a State department of education, a principals' professional development organisation, a national parent body representing state schools, and several organisations both within Australia and North America with responsibility for the provision of rural education. Preliminary findings were presented to the project Reference Group, and interpretations of this material were discussed via a telephone conference with group members.

*Theory triangulation* was enhanced because data collection and initial interpretation was undertaken by a team of five researchers, including the writer. Each researcher reflected slightly different theoretical viewpoints, with expertise in a variety of different although related areas of research, including educational leadership, social capital, and community development. By comparing and discussing data within the team, some theory triangulation occurred 'since no two investigators ever interpret things entirely the same ... [and] the alternative meaning can be very useful in helping readers understand the case' (Stake 1995, pp. 113–114).

*Methodological triangulation*, which Stake (1995) described as the most commonly used and recognised technique, comprised the use of multiple approaches to data collection (interview, observation and documentation) to allow the researcher to better understand and explain the meaning of the phenomenon. Specifically, a chain of evidence was maintained to show how evidence had been built up from multiple sources—a technique used in the write up of the five case studies. (Further details of the case studies are provided later in this chapter.) As Stake (1995) noted, sometimes a comparison of sources confirms the researcher's interpretation; at other times it suggests further investigation is needed.

*Member checking* is an important strategy in qualitative research, given that the inquiry is value-bound and subject to researcher bias (Lincoln & Guba 1985). In terms of triangulation by member checking, preliminary findings from the study were presented for comment and discussion at community meetings in each of the five study sites (see the later section on 'Community meetings' for further details). In addition, school principals in each of the study sites were forwarded a first draft of the case study which they were asked to check for accuracy. They were also invited to provide copies of the draft to other interview participants for checking, as appropriate. All school principals responded to this request by providing minor amendments to the case studies, but overall they confirmed the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations.

Other strategies used to specifically address issues of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability, are discussed below.

### *Credibility*

Credibility refers to strategies to ensure findings are believable, convincing and accurate, and is similar to what Burns (2000) described as internal validity. As Burns noted, qualitative research is considered to be high in internal validity because of data collection techniques that require the researcher to live among participants and collect data over a long period of time. Credibility is enhanced by involvement of researchers in the field and extensive interviewing of a number of different people to provide supporting evidence (Miles & Huberman 1984; Patton 1990; Yin 1994). The research team spent between two days to one full week in each study site, depending on size, and conducted extensive interviews with a range of participants regarding the development of school–community partnerships. Another way to enhance credibility is to include negative cases (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). There are no negative cases in the study because the purposive sampling strategy ensured only examples of effective school–community partnerships were selected. However, within each major case study, examples of negative or unsatisfactory



activities/outcomes were described where they existed, to help the reader better understand the difficulties associated with developing school–community partnerships.

### *Dependability*

Dependability refers to consistency of findings over time, and with similar investigations, and is similar to reliability, although it is generally accepted that in terms of qualitative research, and of case study inquiry in particular, the notion of replicability is not possible given that such research is context specific and that ‘the value of the case study is its uniqueness ... (Janesick 2000, p. 394). Dependability in the study was enhanced by some of the strategies already discussed, including involvement of researchers in the field, and extensive interviewing (Miles & Huberman 1984; Patton 1990; Yin 1994). In addition, techniques such as audiotaping interviews (Bogdan & Biklen 1992), methodological triangulation (Stake 1995; Burns 2000), and coder checks in which other members of the project team were asked to code the same work and then compare results and resolve differences (Babbie 1998), were used to enhance dependability.

### *Confirmability*

Confirmability refers to the ability of outsiders to audit data collection process and product; that is, the ability of outsiders to determine correspondence between researcher inferences and participants’ intended meanings. A number of steps can be taken to ensure consistency of data collection and interpretation, and to address issues of interviewer bias and coder difference in the data analysis process. Strategies used in this study included triangulation through member checking (Stake 1995; Janesick 2000), and detailed and transparent documentation of data collection and analysis procedures, including coverage of sampling decisions, data collection instruments and practices, software used, overview of analytic strategies, and inclusion of key data displays that support the main conclusions (Huberman & Miles 1994).

### *Transferability*

Transferability refers to the ability to transfer findings from one setting to another. Some researchers refer to this as generalisability (a term borrowed from the quantitative or scientific research tradition), or in the case of Stake (1995) as ‘naturalistic generalisation’. Qualitative researchers (see, for example, Stake 1995; Burns 2000; Janesick 2000) concur that the very nature of qualitative research, particularly case studies which focus on a single setting, means that findings cannot be readily translated to other settings. Although some researchers in the scientific tradition criticise case studies because they are not generalisable, Burns (2000) countered this with the argument that it is up to the reader to make generalisations as appropriate. He noted: ‘The case study investigator is trying to facilitate the reader’s own analysis more than deliver

statements of generalisation' (p. 475). Consistent with strategies for enhancing transferability documented in the literature (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Stake 1995; Burns 2000; Janesick 2000), and following a constructivist view of knowledge (Stake 1995), the study provides thick, rich description to allow readers to 'vicariously experience these happenings and draw conclusions' (Stake 2000, p. 439). As Stake (1995) observed, '[c]onstructivism helps a case study researcher justify lots of narrative description in the final report' (p. 102). Transferability was also enhanced by cross-case analyses (Huberman & Miles 1994) which is discussed in more detail in a later section titled 'The case studies'.

## **Site selection**

Using a purposive sampling strategy (Burns 2000) as described earlier, in September 1999, information letters outlining the purpose of the research and criteria for selection of potential study sites were forwarded to representatives of a number of key Australian organisations, as well as to a number of individual stakeholders, involved in rural education and community development. The letters contained forms for nomination of study sites. Organisational representatives included education department district superintendents (or equivalent) in each State/Territory with responsibility for rural education; directors of Catholic Education Offices in rural diocese in each State/Territory; executive officers of the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council Inc., Australian Secondary Principals Association, Australian Primary Principals Association, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools of Australia, Australian Council of State School Organisations, and Australian Parents Council Inc.; and the president of the Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia. Individuals included the seven members of the project Reference Group, as well as other practitioners and researchers in the rural education and community development fields. A media release detailing the aims of the project and criteria for selection of study sites, and seeking nominations of suitable study sites from community members, was also forwarded to rural newspapers in each State/Territory, and to the editor of the newsletter of the Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia. Copies of the information and nomination letters and media release are provided in Appendix B.

In order to be eligible for consideration, nominated sites needed to meet the following criteria:

- Community population of less than 10 000 people.
- The local school(s) had to play an active and ongoing role in improving social and economic outcomes for the community. Evidence was required of a close partnership between the school

and one or more of the following local groups/organisations: industry; large and small business; government, and community groups.

- The school(s) had to be physically located within the community (for the purposes of this study, School of the Air and other forms of correspondence education or home schooling were excluded).

In addition, Indigenous communities in which the school(s) played an active role were encouraged to nominate.

Over 100 individual sites were nominated. Six of these sites were nominated more than once. Of the nominated sites, two were ineligible because their population exceeded the 10 000 limit, and one because it was a suburb of a city rather than a discrete rural community. Because of the large number of sites remaining, those individuals/organisations who had nominated more than one site were contacted by phone, and asked to rank their nominations according to the strength of the school–community partnership and the strength of school and community leadership within the site. The first-ranked site from each was included in the list of nominations, and the remainder were not considered. Information was collected for the remaining 44 sites, from both the nominator and the nominee (usually the principal of the school being nominated). This information included details of rural and other industries; population size and background; measure of remoteness, number and type of schools within the community; existence of a VET in schools program; stage of the school–community partnership, details of the partnership, and information about the nature and extent of school and community leadership.

A shortlist of 14 potential sites was then drawn up, comprising sites from each State/Territory which displayed strong school–community partnerships and strong school and community leadership, including sites with innovative partnerships. Given that the funding body for this research was the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, each of the 14 sites shortlisted was selected because of their rural industry focus. The shortlist of sites was presented to the project Reference Group for discussion. From this shortlist, the research team recommended five sites and, following discussion with the Reference Group, these sites were endorsed for study. The sites were: Cooktown (Queensland), Cowell (South Australia), Margaret River (Western Australia), Meander (Tasmania) and Walla Walla (New South Wales). They were selected because they represented diversity in respect of the following final selection criteria, in accordance with Stake's (1995) guidelines for case selection which state that '[b]alance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance' (p. 6). The final selection criteria were:

- State/Territory;
- type of rural and other industry;
- degree of remoteness;
- population size and background (Indigenous, non-Indigenous);
- type of school(s)—primary only, primary and secondary, area, private and government schools);
- gender of school/community leaders;
- existence and nature of VET in schools programs in at least two of the sites;
- stage of the school–community partnership, and
- partnership with different sectors of the community.

An additional selection criterion related to location, in that one of the sites had to be located within Tasmania. This was brought about by funding restrictions, and the need to reduce travel and accommodation costs where possible.

The characteristics of each site in terms of the selection criteria are displayed in Table 4.

## **Interviewee selection**

Using a purposive sampling strategy (Burns 2000), four groups of interviewees were identified and, within each site, responses were deliberately sought from representatives of each of these four groups. The groups were:

- school staff (including principals, teachers, teacher aides, administrative staff);
- youth (both at school as well as school leavers up to the age of 20);
- individual parents/community members with either informal (e.g. voluntary reading tutor, canteen helper) or formal (e.g. member of the parent association, school council or equivalent bodies) school involvement, or both, and
- community members representing key community groups/organisations (e.g. service clubs, local businesses, local industry).

In addition, attempts were made to include approximately equal numbers of female and male respondents, plus respondents representing all age groups, extending from primary school-aged children to retirees.

In total, 227 individuals were interviewed for the project. The breakdown was as follows: Cooktown (42); Cowell (40); Margaret River (86); Meander (32) and Walla Walla (27). Some interviews were conducted individually whilst others were conducted as focus groups. It should be noted that in Cooktown a number of interviewees expressed their preference for being interviewed in pairs or groups rather than individually, and this is reflected in the following breakdown: Cooktown (23 people interviewed individually, 19 in groups); Cowell (24 people interviewed individually, 16 in groups); Margaret River (50 people interviewed individually, 36 in groups); Meander (24 people interviewed individually, 8 in groups), and Walla Walla (18 people interviewed individually, 9 in groups). The use of focus groups for a number of the interviews with Indigenous people in Cooktown, and for most interviews with school students in each of the five study sites, is in accordance with Denzin and Lincoln (2000), who advocated focus groups as an important strategy in empowering particular groups of people with unequal power resources, including Indigenous people and those from lower socioeconomic status groups. Focus group interviews were also conducted with some school staff in each of the five study sites. The reason for using focus groups for school staff was for expediency, rather than empowerment, a legitimate use of focus group interviews according to Fontana and Frey (2000).

Of the total interviews conducted, one interview from Margaret River had to be withdrawn due to issues regarding informed consent, and one from Walla Walla was unable to be used due to technical problems with audio recording equipment. This left a total of 225 usable interviews.

Table 4: Site characteristics

Site name/state	Population	Industry (rural and other)	Degree of remoteness <sup>#</sup>	Total number/type of school(s) in community	Focal school features	Gender of school <sup>a</sup> and community leaders	Stage of school–community partnership <sup>+</sup>	Community sectors in partnership with school
Cooktown, Queensland	3147≈ (30% Indigenous)	Cattle, grain, horticulture, mining, tourism, service centre	Very remote <sup>*</sup>	One state government area school (Pre-primary–Year 12). Five state government feeder primary schools (Pre-primary–Year 7)	Area school with VET program	Male school principal; female and male community leaders	Mid	Business, rural industry, mining, local government, Indigenous groups, parents/other individuals in community
Cowell, South Australia	1241	Aquaculture, fishing, cereal, grains, fat lambs	Semi remote <sup>§</sup>	One state government area school only (Pre-primary–Year 12)	Area school with VET program	Female school principal; female and male community leaders	Mid–late	Business, aquaculture industry, local government, environmental groups, parents/other community members
Margaret River, Western Australia	9953	Viticulture, dairying, tourism, service centre	Semi remote <sup>*</sup>	One state government senior high school (Years 8–12). Seven feeder primary schools (four state government and three private) from Pre-primary–Year 7	Senior high school with VET program	Male school principal; community leaders male plus one key female	Late	Business, viticulture industry, local government, TAFE, service clubs, churches, parents/other individuals in community

(cont'd over)

Table 4 (cont'd)

Site name/state	Population	Industry (rural and other)	Degree of remoteness <sup>#</sup>	Total number/type of school(s) in community	Focal school features	Gender of school <sup>a</sup> and community leaders	Stage of school–community partnership <sup>‡</sup>	Community sectors in partnership with school
Meander, Tasmania	258	Dairying, timber processing, tourism, arts and crafts	Not remote	One state government primary school (Pre-primary–Year 6)	Primary school	Male school principal; female and male community leaders	Late	Environmental groups, arts and crafts groups, parents/other individuals in community
Walla Walla, New South Wales	606	Grain, sheep, cattle, agricultural machinery and engineering	Not remote	One private Lutheran boarding school (Years 7–12). One state government primary school (Pre-primary–Year 6)	Private Lutheran boarding school with VET program	Male school principal; female and male community leaders	Early	Rural industry, Lutheran church, parents/other individuals in community, other organisations

**Notes:**

<sup>#</sup> Degree of remoteness is determined according to accessibility to 201 service centres across Australia, using the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) developed by the Department of Health and Aged Care in collaboration with the National Key Centre for Social Applications of Geographical Information Systems (Bureau of Rural Sciences 1999, p. 113).

<sup>\*</sup> All the schools included in the Cooktown study, and two of the schools included in the Margaret River study, namely Augusta Primary and Karridale Primary, attract Commonwealth funding under the Country Areas Programme (CAP). This funding is administered by departments of education in each state, and directed to schools which are classified as geographically isolated.

<sup>‡</sup> The school in this site has elected to receive Partnerships 21 funding rather than CAP funding. Partnerships 21 is a South Australian model of local school management which includes additional funding for rural/remote schools.

<sup>a</sup> Where there was more than one school, the gender of the main, or focal, school principal only, is given.

Tables 5, 6 and 7 provide a breakdown of interviewees in each site by gender, age and interviewee type, respectively.

**Table 5: Interviewees in each site by gender**

Site	No. of females	No. of males	Total*
Cooktown	21	21	42
Cowell	18	22	40
Margaret River	44	41	85
Meander	21	11	32
Walla Walla	12	14	26
	116	109	225

\* Refers to usable interviews

**Table 6: Interviewees in each site by age**

Site	20 yrs or under	21–40 yrs	41–60 yrs#	Over 60 yrs	Total*
Cooktown	6	14	21	1	42
Cowell	6	11	21	2	40
Margaret River	22	27	32	4	85
Meander	4	4	21	3	32
Walla Walla	7	5	14	0	26
	45	61	109	10	225

\* Refers to usable interviews

# The predominance of interviewees in this age group is most likely explained by the relatively large proportion of school staff and business/industry representatives from this age group in leadership positions responsible for the development of school–community linkages.

**Table 7: Interviewees in each site by interviewee type**

Site	School staff	Youth	Parents/community members	Community group representatives	Total*
Cooktown	13	6	8	15	42
Cowell	9	6	12	13	40
Margaret River	24	22	23	16	85
Meander	9	4	13	6	32
Walla Walla	8	7	6	5	26
	63	45	62	55	225

\* Refers to usable interviews

Note that although a number of interviewees had multiple roles within the school and/or community, the above table records only the main role (i.e. the primary reason for selecting each interviewee).



## **Data collection**

### **Role of the research team**

Collective case studies are best undertaken by a research team, in that 'no one individual can handle all the complexity' (Stake 1995, p. 445). As part of the study, data collection and preliminary analysis from each of the five sites was undertaken by a research team comprising the writer and four other members, as detailed in Chapter 1. Two researchers were assigned to larger sites, with single researchers assigned to smaller sites. In accordance with Stake (1995), who recommended that '[a]s much as possible, sites, key groups or actors, and issues should be assigned to single team members ...' (p. 445), where there were two researchers per site, each had clearly defined areas of responsibility, in terms of the groups of interviewees each would target. Those involved in data collection in a particular site also undertook responsibility for write up of the case study.

### **Data sources**

By selecting a specific inquiry strategy, researchers are connected 'to specific approaches and methods for collecting and analyzing empirical materials' (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p. 371). In accordance with the multi-method and extensive data collection techniques associated with a case study strategy of inquiry (Stake 1995; Creswell 1998; Burns 2000; Denzin & Lincoln 2000), data were collected using three recognised techniques: semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. A fourth technique, community perception maps, was also used. Each of these techniques is described below.

#### *Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews with probes were deemed appropriate, in order to elicit extensive and rich data in relation to the subject of the research, while giving a direction to the interview (Stake 1995; Burns 2000). Specifically, such interviews are preferred over structured interviews because 'this permits greater flexibility than the close-ended type and permits a more valid response from the informant's perception of reality' (Burns 2000, p. 424). To correspond with the four target groups of interviewees, four interview schedules were devised: Interview Schedule 1 School Staff; Interview Schedule 2 Youth; Interview Schedule 3 Parent/Community Member, and Interview Schedule 4 Organisation Representative. Each interview schedule contained a similar set of core questions, including background questions regarding the community and the school, information about changes in the school and community and the way in which they came about, and a set of questions about the individual interviewee and his/her participation in school and community activities. The remainder of the questions asked about the nature, extent and

outcomes of school–community linkages, and in each interview schedule were framed slightly differently to reflect the interests of the four target interviewee groups. Each schedule contained approximately nine questions, although Interview Schedule 1 was slightly longer with 11 questions.

Following a case study strategy of inquiry, the purpose of the different groups of questions was as follows:

Questions	Purpose
Background questions regarding the community and the school	To allow for a detailed description of context, to give the reader a sense of being there
Information about changes in the school and community and the way in which they came about	Further contextual material, to help build a picture of generic school and community leadership processes
Questions on the nature, extent and outcomes of school–community linkages	To gain detailed information about the impact of school–community partnerships on community development; the process of developing school–community partnerships, and the issues relevant to each case (i.e. to answer the specific research questions for the study)
Questions about each individual interviewee and his/her participation in school and community activities	To elicit information about individual's characteristics and attributes especially as they impact on leadership, and to gain some indication of the extent of social capital within the community, by assessing the involvement of individuals in community and civic groups*

\*In some research studies the level of involvement of individuals in community/civic groups has been used as an indicator for measuring the extent of social capital. In the current study, the purpose was not to measure the extent of social capital, but to gain some indication of the presence of social capital and the involvement of players in school–community partnerships in helping to develop social capital. Unfortunately, due to lack of time, most interviewees were not asked about their involvement in community groups, so responses to this question were not able to be used to build a picture of social capital within the community. However, earlier background questions about the school and community allowed researchers to gain some indication of school and community social capital.

### Trialling of interview schedules

Prior to the commencement of data collection, the schedules were trialled in March 2000 with a small group of volunteers from within the University of Tasmania (including parents and former school teachers), as well as with a small group of students from a local primary school. Trialling of interview schedules is consistent with recognised case study practice (Stake 1995), and contributes to trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba 1985) of the research instrument. Comments on the design of the schedules were also received from members of the project Reference Group.

Following trialling, it was found that the schedules were too long to be completed in the suggested 45 minutes, and that the wording of several questions was ambiguous or unclear. In addition, it was noted that Interview Schedule 1 for school staff contained at least one question asking educators to comment on matters outside their professional expertise. The four interview schedules were subsequently reduced in length, by combining questions with a similar or related theme; by deleting questions or parts of questions that did not relate directly to the research questions for the study; and by deleting those questions in Interview Schedule 1 that asked educators to comment on matters outside their professional expertise. In addition, the wording of questions was revised, to ensure clarity of meaning. An additional question was included in Interview Schedule 2 that focused directly on school leavers. Copies of all four interview schedules are provided in Appendix C.

#### Participant information and consent

In accordance with University of Tasmania Ethics Committee (Human Experimentation) guidelines current in 2000, prior to each interview, participants were informed about the purpose of the interview, and issues of confidentiality were discussed. Participants were provided with an Information Sheet and a Statement of Informed Consent which they were asked to sign before the interview commenced. A separate Statement of Informed Consent was provided for school principals. For youth under 18 years of age, a Parental Consent form was forwarded by the school to the parent/guardian of each participating student. Interviews with students were only conducted once signed Parental Consent forms had been returned. At the completion of the interview, participants were invited to complete a Further Contact form, so they could be mailed details regarding community meetings at which preliminary findings from the study were presented. Copies of the Information Sheet, Informed Consent (for principals, and for all other interviewees), Parental Consent, and Further Contact forms are provided in Appendix D.

#### *Observation*

Observation and interviewing are 'mutually reinforcing qualitative techniques [that act as] a bridge to understanding the fundamentally people-oriented nature of qualitative inquiry' (Patton 1990, p. 32). Specifically, the field notes that result from observation should be both descriptive, as well as factual and accurate (Patton 1990). Members of the research team were in each of the schools and communities for a period of up to one week. During this time, they observed and documented a range of activities and interactions such as interactions in the staffroom, classrooms, staff meetings, meetings of parent bodies, school councils and management committees, and VET in schools work placements. Following Bogdan and Biklen (1992), data collectors were encouraged to make regular field notes containing two sorts of materials:

descriptive (settings, people, actions) and reflective (on emerging themes, the researcher's biases, conflicts and ethical dilemmas). Where there were two data collectors per site, these notes were compared each evening. Where there was only one data collector per site, these notes provided a useful debriefing tool when data collection was completed.

### *Written documentation*

As qualitative research is about exploring and documenting multiple realities, written documentation is an important data source, allowing researchers to further understand how the case is defined by different people. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) identify two sources of documentation: internal (memos and other communications within schools and organisations) and external (produced for public consumption). At each site, documentation collected was largely what Bogdan and Biklen refer to as external; this included copies of school magazines, newsletters, written policies and material publicising school successes, as well as material from community sources such as community newspapers. This material was used to check the consistency of different data sources; that is, to enhance trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba 1985), or internal validity (Burns 2000) of the data. However, the limitations of written documentation are recognised. Specifically, because it is socially determined and based on certain social conventions and understandings (Denzin & Lincoln 2000), written documentation is subjective and has a tendency to present an unrealistically positive picture (Bogdan & Biklen 1992). For these reasons, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest that '[i]t is important that researchers not use text-based documentary materials as stand-ins for other kinds of evidence' (p. 640). Accordingly, written documentation was only one of four sources of data used in the study.

### *Community perception maps*

Community perception maps were a fourth data source. In order to gain an understanding of the extent to which each community could be considered inward or outward focused, and therefore gain some indication of community orientation towards collective action involving internal and external linkages, each interview participant was asked to indicate the boundaries of his/her community on a map provided by the researchers. Most, but not all, respondents did this. A number of respondents also described community boundaries at the beginning of the interview. These perceptions are provided in Chapter 4 (see Table 9). Although designed to give the research team and the reader some understanding of the extent to which the majority of community members in each site were inward or outward looking, these data were not drawn on extensively in writing up the final case studies or in cross-case analysis (see later section on 'The case studies'), as had been the original intention. This is because, on reflection, the maps represented relatively narrow geographical boundaries for several of the sites, potentially

influencing participants' perceptions of their communities. That is, because of researcher bias in selecting maps with relatively narrow geographical boundaries, there is a likelihood that some participants may have made their perceptions 'fit' the map, rather than reflect their own community perception. Findings derived from these maps are therefore treated with caution.

## **Data analysis**

### **Interview data**

Stake (1995) argued against extensive audiotaping and transcribing of interviews because 'the amount of taped data a researcher can work with is very small. The researcher should develop skill in keeping shorthand notes and count on member checks to get the meanings straight' (p. 56). Instead, Stake recommended that time be allocated immediately after each interview to writing up interview notes. However, other researchers, such as Bogdan and Biklen (1992), support audiotaping and transcription of interviews, especially where interviewing is the major source of data and where extensive interviews are involved. Drawing on Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) guidelines, all interviews for the study were audiotaped and later transcribed. There were several reasons for this: most interviews were conducted back-to-back, giving data collectors little or no time to write up interview notes between each; the data collectors felt that they could best build rapport with interviewees by maintaining eye contact which would not have been possible if they were required to take notes during the interview; and because a large number of people had to be interviewed in a relatively short space of time, there was a concern that not all relevant issues from interviews would be captured by note taking alone. Other justifications for audiotaping and transcribing interviews included the availability of sufficient time and financial support to allow for transcribing by professional transcribers, and the availability and use of NUD\*IST (Non-Numeric Unstructured Data Information Searching and Theorising) computer software for storage and quick retrieval of transcribed data (see the later section on 'Computer-assisted data analysis' for a detailed discussion of NUD\*IST).

Consistent with the inductive analytic approach of qualitative research (Patton 1990), which uses exploration, discovery and inductive logic to make sense of a situation, a selection of transcribed interviews from each site was provided to each project team member for preliminary identification of key themes. Following discussion of emerging themes over the course of two project team meetings and through individual consultation, the writer developed a draft coding framework. In accordance with established coding practices (see, for example, Dey 1993; Burns 2000), the framework was derived from key themes identified in the data, in conjunction with themes identified in the literature and from team members' own experiences. Relevant literature

included Miller's (1995) categorisation of school–community partnerships into curriculum-based, enterprise-based and event/resource-based. Consistent with the writer's and the project team's conception of leadership as a process synonymous with the community development process, Lane and Dorfman's (1997) documentation of the collaborative community development process, together with Falk and Smith's (2003) model of leadership intervention, provided an overarching framework to inform analysis of leadership issues. In addition, functional aspects of leadership were informed by conceptual and operational definitions of the six-factor model for leaders (Silins, Mulford & Zarins 1999), and by the Tasmanian Principal Competency Profile (Department of Education 1999). The coding framework was then cross-checked against themes identified in the research questions.

The writer, together with a second team member, manually coded all interviews. As coding represents a key stage of the data analysis process (Ryan & Bernard 2000), consistency in interview coding is vital. To ensure consistency, coders cross-checked with each other on a regular basis, discussing areas of ambiguity and determining where new codes were needed. The writer then developed new codes and made the necessary modifications to the coding framework, acting in the role of 'keeper' of the codebook as recommended by MacQueen et al. (1981, cited in Ryan & Bernard 2000). In accordance with qualitative data analysis procedures, and with grounded theory in particular, coding using comparative analysis techniques continued until the themes and categories became saturated—that is, until no new themes or categories were identified (Burns 2000). As coding proceeded, all codes were clearly defined, including illustrative examples where possible, to further ensure consistency of coding between coders. This accords with guidelines to increase coding consistency and accuracy provided by Dey (1993) and Ryan and Bernard (2000). A copy of the final coding framework, including definitions, is provided in Appendix E. In accordance with Creswell (1998), who recommended a short list of five or six, and not more than 25–30, categories as a manageable amount to work with in the final publication, the coding framework for the study has eight major categories and a number of sub-categories.

Interview transcripts and their codes were then imported into the NUD\*IST computer software program.

## **Other data**

Observation notes and written documentation collected from the sites were also coded against the framework described above. Researcher observation notes were available electronically, and

were coded and imported directly into NUD\*IST. Documentation was only available in hard copy, and was coded and entered into NUD\*IST in the form of off-line documents.

### **Computer-assisted data analysis**

Recent years have seen a growth in the use of computer-assisted data analysis in both quantitative and qualitative research, and a number of research methodologists have reviewed the subject (see, for example, Creswell 1998; Burns 2000; Charmaz 2000). Burns (2000) summarised what most regard as the strengths of computer-assisted data analysis: a reduction in time spent on data analysis, and the ability to analyse relatively large data sets with little technical difficulty. Large data sets are defined as comprising 500 or more pages (Creswell 1998). Because the study has a data base of between 312 and 1020 pages of transcription per site, plus written documentation and observation notes, computer-assisted analysis was deemed necessary.

Although there are a number of qualitative data analysis programs available, a number of researchers (Creswell 1998; Burns 2000; Charmaz 2000) agree that the features of the NUD\*IST program make it one of the best qualitative analysis programs available at the present time. Designed specifically for grounded theory research, NUD\*IST facilitates theory building by searching for links among codes and building a network of code patterns (Burns 2000). Because the program allows data to be coded in more than one way, researchers are able to record the multiple perspectives that are the essence of qualitative research (Burns 2000). The ability to insert researcher memos into the text to aid in analysis is identified as another strength of NUD\*IST (Coffey, Holbrook & Atkinson 1996, cited in Charmaz 2000).

NUD\*IST was selected as an appropriate tool for use in this case-based research study, because of its appropriateness in exploring a new, under-researched area where there was a need to explore and analyse emerging patterns (Prothero 1996). In addition, for 'case studies with multiple types of information, computer programs provide an invaluable aid in research' (Creswell 1998, p. 155). The other key criteria for selecting NUD\*IST were similar to those identified by Prothero (1996), including: assistance with the sorting of data, by utilising the program's coding facility and hierarchical coding tree framework; the ease with which coding could be modified by adding, deleting or merging nodes; its usefulness as a tool for data analysis, and the provision of an 'audit trail', which has also been identified by various researchers (see, for example, Huberman & Miles 1994) as an important strategy in enhancing research trustworthiness and confirmability.

Despite the strengths of NUD\*IST, researchers (Prothero 1996; Creswell 1998; Charmaz 2000) also express some concern about relying solely on computer-assisted data analysis, as it may promote a superficial view of the material under investigation and prevent the researcher from gaining a comprehensive view of the whole, which is central to qualitative research. This criticism is not entirely unfounded, as searches retrieve segments of coded text independent of their original context, although it should be noted that NUD\*IST does have a Spread facility which allows the researcher to view text within the context of larger segments of the interview, or of the whole interview, as appropriate.

## **Community meetings**

Following preliminary data analysis, the writer developed a set of preliminary findings for the study. These included generic findings regarding the process of partnership development, illustrated with specific examples from each study site. Following comment from the research team and the project Reference Group, these preliminary findings were presented at community meetings in each of the five study sites. All interviewees were invited to attend the meetings, which were attended by between one quarter and one third of the respondents in most sites.

The community meetings were an important source of data triangulation by member checking (Stake 1995; Janesick 2000), providing valuable feedback to the project team on the confirmability of the findings and suggesting some recommendations to be included in the final report to the funding body. Copies of a sample invitation to the community meeting in Margaret River, together with a summary of issues and recommendations from each of the community meetings, are provided in Appendix F.

## **The case studies**

Following the community meetings, case study write up was completed for each of the five study sites, informed by community feedback. The case studies are included in Appendix G. The writer was involved in the write up and/or review of all case studies, as acknowledgments at the foot of the first page of each case study indicate. Although they were not written solely by the writer, the format for case study presentation was determined by the writer, in accordance with case study protocol. The format includes a detailed description of context (Stake 1995; Creswell 1998); development of the case issues (Stake 1995), and inclusion of extensive descriptive detail, including quotations from participant interviews (Stake 1995). The extensive use of quotations is a strategy designed to ensure credibility of findings. Specifically, '[d]irect quotations are a basic source of raw data ... revealing respondents' depth of emotion, the ways they have organized



their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions' (Patton 1990, p. 24).

Whilst quotations from participants are an important part of the case study report, one of the limitations of qualitative research is difficulty in authenticating results while preserving participant anonymity (Burns 2000). Following protocols identified in the research literature (see, for example, Burns 2000) and approved by the University of Tasmania Ethics Committee (Human Experimentation), individual interview participants were allocated numerical codes by the researcher, and the coding key was stored in a locked filing cabinet separately from the raw data. Only the writer and team members had access to the coding key. When authenticating results, participants' comments were attributed only to the generic participant category (for example, a school staff member, a student). In a small number of cases where participants were identified by their role (for example, the principal and the VET coordinator), these people gave permission to be so identified in the case studies.

### **Cross-case analysis**

Each case study is a stand alone document, rich in narrative description, and containing discussion of the issues, and implications for the future. Following the write up of individual cases, some cross-case analysis in relation to the partnership development process and influencing factors was undertaken by the writer and one other member of the project team. These findings are reported in Chapters 9 and 10 of the final report from the original study.

For the current study, the writer then continued with extensive cross-case analysis specifically in relation to leadership issues and roles in partnership development, which is discussed at length in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. The material presented in Chapter 5 is central to this dissertation, and was produced solely by the writer. The purpose of cross-case analysis is to move to a more general level of abstraction and theory in relation to school–community partnership building. This is consistent with Creswell (1998) who identified 'multiple levels of abstraction' (p. 21), in which researchers move from particular to more general levels of abstraction, as one of the hallmarks of good qualitative research.

The writer utilised a frequently used approach to cross-case analysis, by searching for themes that intersected cases (Huberman & Miles 1994); in this case, themes relating to the stages of development of school–community partnerships, leadership roles at various stages of partnership development, and the commonality of policy and other factors influencing partnership development. Continuing to use NUD\*IST data analysis software for these cross-case analyses,

tension arose between the need to analyse large data sets quickly, while at the same time remaining close to the data and its context. The issue was resolved by utilising strategies similar to those recommended by Prothero (1996), Creswell (1998) and Charmaz (2000). NUD\*IST was used to manage, make initial meaning and overview relatively large data sets; to search for themes, and to allow themes to be crossed and presented in the form of a matrix. It was also used to assist in reporting by quickly locating words, phrases and dialogue that could be used as quotations to 'provide a realistic immediate feel to a qualitative study' (Creswell 1998, p. 163). This was supplemented with the manual method of reading full interview transcriptions a number of times during the data analysis process, in order to remain close to the data and to allow the writer to flesh out the meaning and significance of data by focusing on context.

One of the key advantages of undertaking cross-case analysis is to enhance the transferability of the study, in that studying multiple actors in multiple case study settings contributes to increased generalisability of the findings (Huberman & Miles 1994). In accordance with Patton (1990) and Huberman and Miles (1994), it is necessary to ensure that where cross-case analysis occurs, 'the initial focus is on full understanding of individual cases before those unique cases are combined or aggregated' (Patton 1990, p. 45). Readers are therefore encouraged to read the five case studies (Appendix G) before turning to the cross-case analysis in Chapter 5.

### **Additional research question**

As the writer continued with additional, in depth cross-case analyses on leadership issues for the current study, it became clear that an additional minor research question needed to be devised, to capture the evolving focus on leadership roles and characteristics reflected in the data. Other researchers (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Bogdan & Biklen 1992; Stake 1995) have described the evolving and iterative nature of qualitative research, noting that general research questions early in the study are frequently refined into specific research questions during the data collection and analysis phase. In particular, Stake (1995) has described case study work as being 'progressively focused'. The iterative nature of the current study and the gradually unfolding importance of the issue of leadership roles and characteristics, therefore justified the inclusion of an additional research question during the data analysis phase:

- What leadership roles are necessary for the development of school-community partnerships, and what leadership characteristics and attributes are associated with each of these roles?

## **Limitations of the study**

The five case studies do not identify every school–community partnership, but present a range of school–community partnerships identified by participants as having an impact on the community. In addition, the case studies do not attempt to rigorously measure the impact of these partnerships on rural community social capital, using social capital indicators. The purpose of the study was to establish that school–community partnerships do have an impact on rural community development, and to explore in detail the process through which this happens, including the role of players in the process, and a range of influencing factors.

## **Summary**

Using a case study strategy of inquiry, and multiple data sources, data on the process of developing school–community partnerships were collected from five different study sites. Data were analysed using an inductive analytic approach, with the aid of NUD\*IST computer software. Findings were written up in the form of five case studies, which represent the major source of findings for the study. An overview of findings is presented in Chapter 4, while the case studies are included in Appendix G. Cross-case analysis was then undertaken in order to enhance transferability of the findings. Discussion of cross-case issues is presented in Chapter 5.

# Chapter 4

## Overview of findings<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

As detailed in Chapter 3, data were collected from four sources: semi-structured interviews; researcher observation; written documentation from school and community sources, and community perception maps. These data informed the write up of case studies<sup>2</sup> for each site, which represent the major source of findings for the current study. Case studies are included in Appendix G, and readers will be referred to relevant sections throughout this chapter. Each case study comprises background information on the site and the school; a description of the development, characteristics and outcomes of major school–community partnerships; discussion of the nature and extent of the school’s contribution to the community, and the influence of leadership and other factors on partnership development, and concludes by identifying issues relevant to partnership development in the future. In the Cooktown case study, only one partnership is discussed in detail—the VET in schools partnership that had given rise to the *Step Ahead* program. In the other four case studies, a number of partnerships between school and community are presented. Some of these are informal, but most are relatively formal, characterised by the shared and long-term commitment of partners working towards a common goal.

In addition to the five case studies, other findings will be presented in this chapter, and include:

- a diagrammatic representation of school–community linkages for each of the five sites, synthesised from the five case studies and presented in Figures 3–7;
- a table comparing the characteristics of school–community partnerships at different stages of maturity, synthesised from the five case studies and presented in Table 8, and
- a table and explanatory notes reporting findings from the community perception maps completed by interview participants, regarding the extent of each community’s inward or outward-looking orientation from the perspective of the study participants (Table 9).

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<sup>1</sup> All material in this chapter is the original work of Susan Johns and, apart from Table 9 and the related definitions of local, extended and regional communities, is new. Table 9 and definitions first appeared in Chapter 3 of the original report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Co-authors of the original report, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Professor Bill Mulford, and Ms Libby Prescott, all from the University of Tasmania, and Professor Ian Falk from the Northern Territory University, attest to the fact that Susan Johns is the sole author of all material contained in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The case studies first appeared as Chapters 4 to 8 in the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, but have been modified slightly to better reflect issues relevant to the current study.

The overview of findings presented in this chapter is arranged in three sections, according to the three research questions.

## **How do school and community leadership processes influence rural community development through school–community partnerships?**

### **Bonding, bridging and linking social capital**

The five case studies present material relating to the existence and extent of bonding social capital (trust between family, friends, neighbours, work mates or people of similar backgrounds) within each of the five focal schools, and within community groups more generally. Much of this information is contained in the sections describing the development, characteristics and outcomes of major school–community partnerships, and the discussion of the nature and extent of the school's contribution to the community, and the influence of leadership and other factors on partnership development.

The nature and extent of bridging social capital (ties with a diverse range of individuals and/or organisations including civic and community groups) and linking social capital (ties with individuals or institutions representing power and authority) is presented in Figures 3 to 7 on the following pages. These diagrams are all the writer's original work, and were produced specifically for inclusion in the current study. They did not feature in the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Network diagrams similar to these have been used by other social capital researchers (see, for example, CRLRA 2000, 2001; Stone & Hughes 2001) to document the nature and extent of community social capital. Figures 3 to 7 were derived from interview data, written documentation and researcher observation, and illustrate the nature and extent of social capital involving the school, within each community. Bridging social capital is represented by the inner layer of circles closest to the school, while linking social capital is represented by the outer layer of circles furthest away from the school, and shaded in grey. Weaker or developing linkages are denoted by a broken line. It needs to be noted that Figures 3 to 7 do not represent the entire extent of social capital within each community. Whilst some attempt has been made to give an indication of bridging and linking social capital between groups and institutions within each site, it is noted that these linkages are not depicted in their entirety, and it was beyond the scope of the current study to do this. However, the figures do represent the major linkages internal and external to each community that involved the school, as indicated in the data collected.

**Figure 3: Bridging and linking social capital in Cooktown**

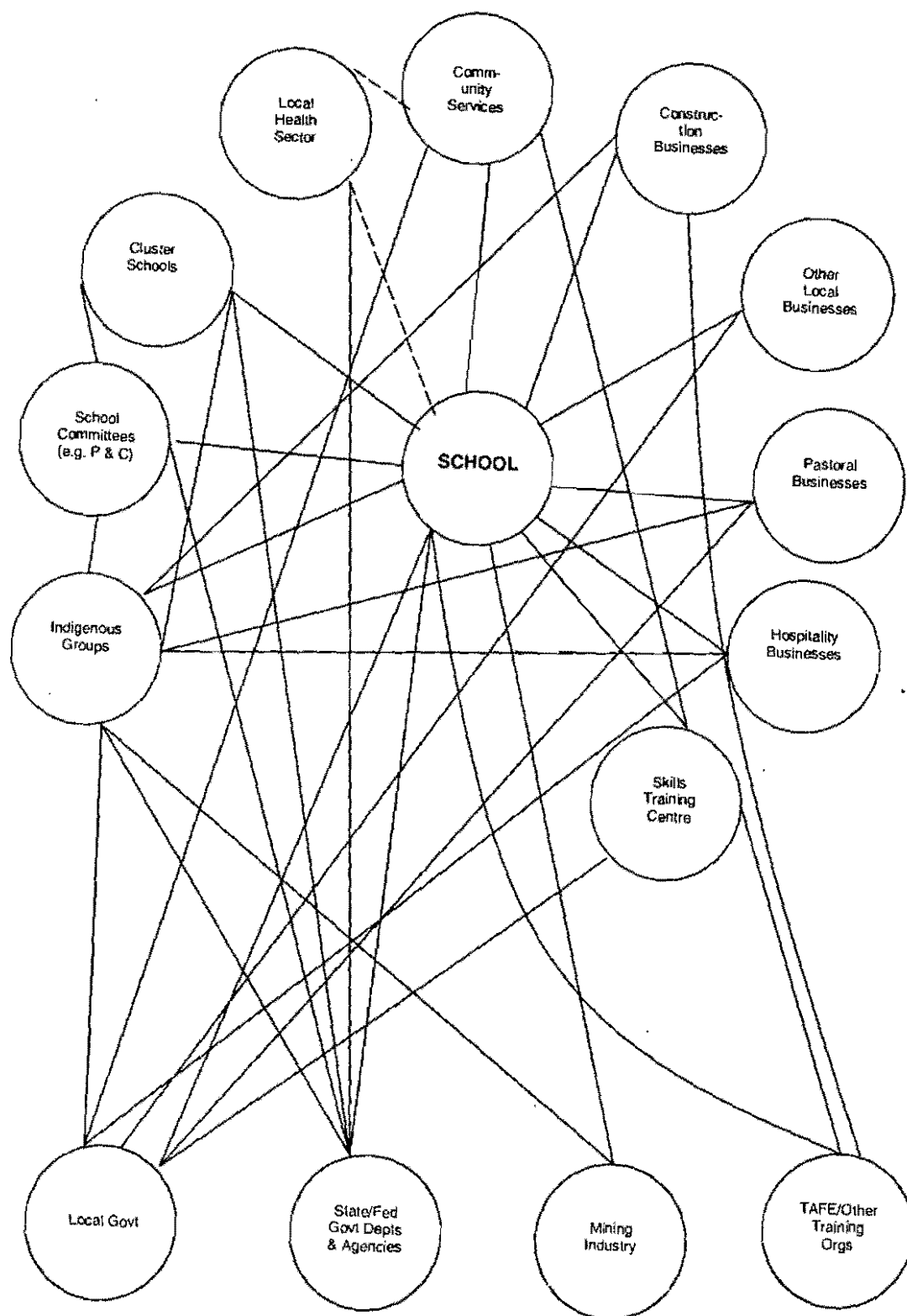


Figure 4: Bridging and linking social capital in Cowell

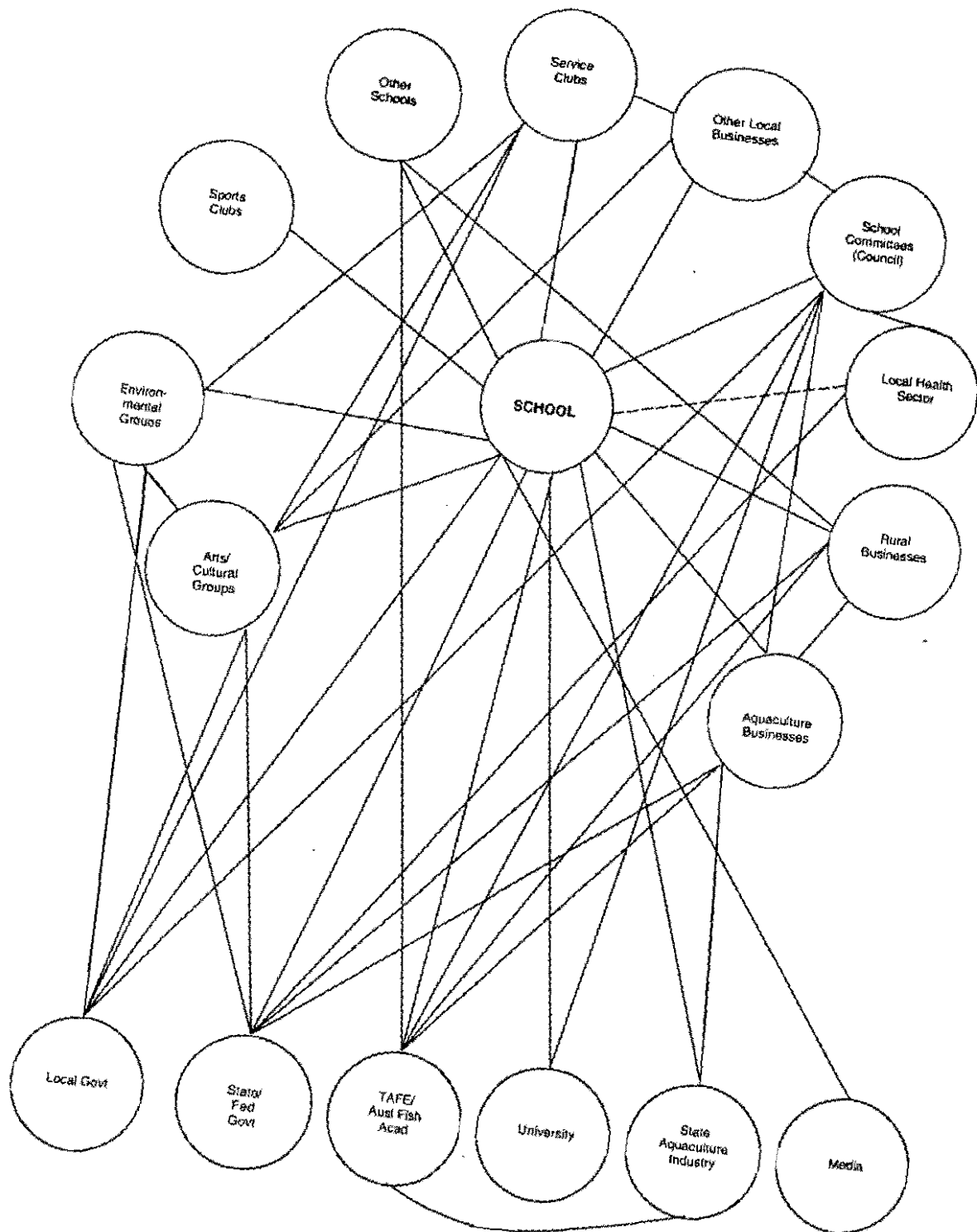


Figure 5: Bridging and linking social capital in Margaret River

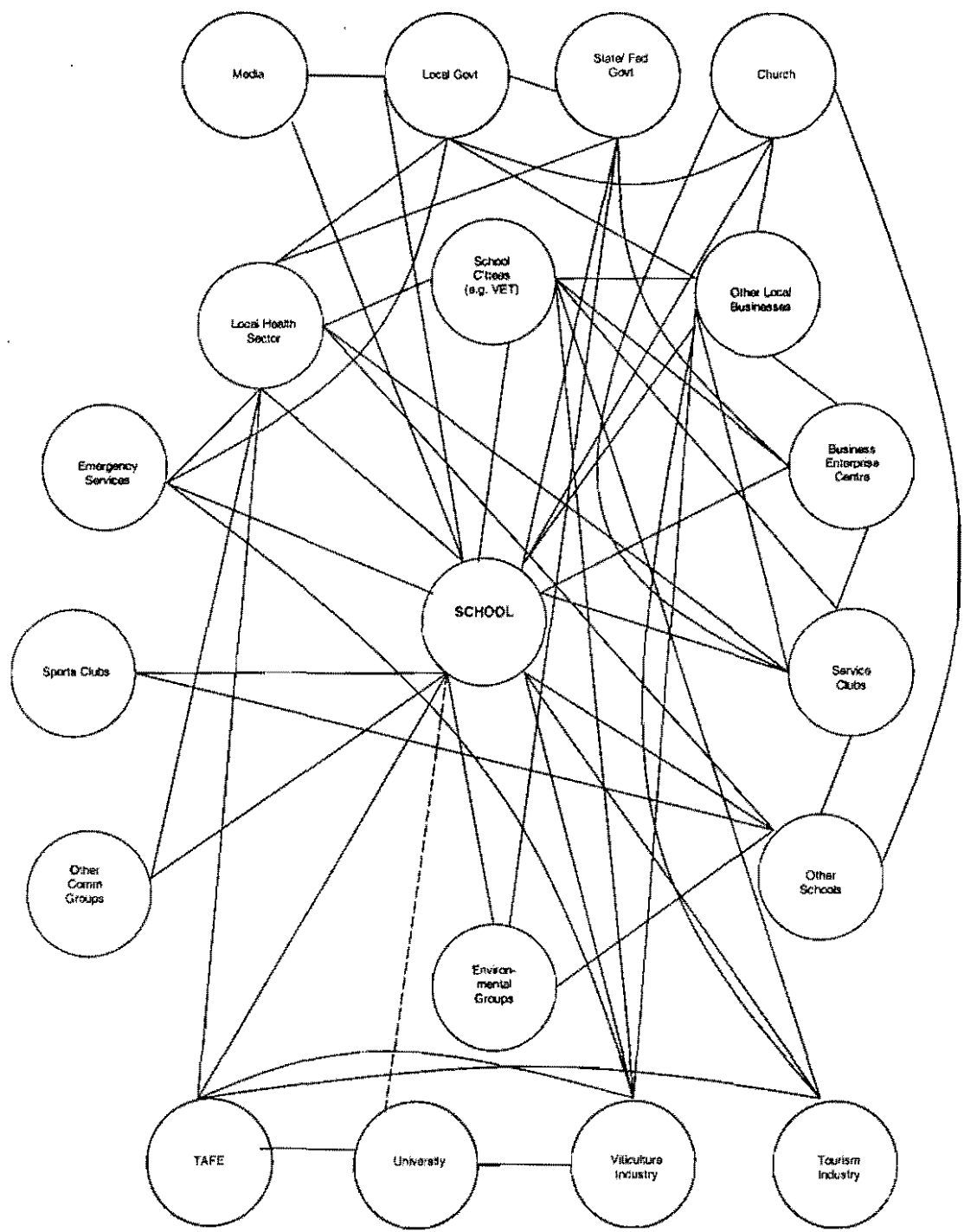




Figure 6: Bridging and linking social capital in Meander

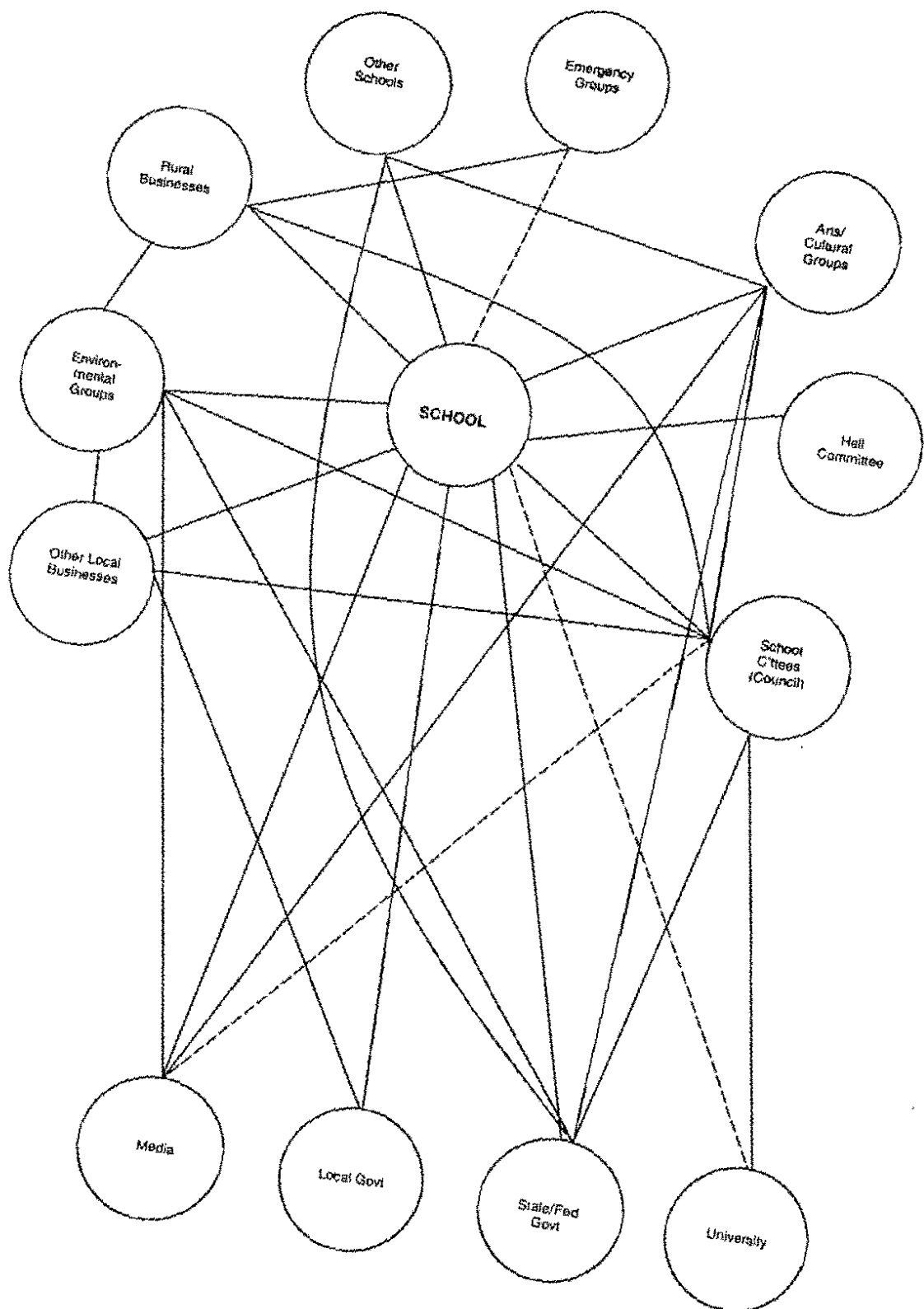
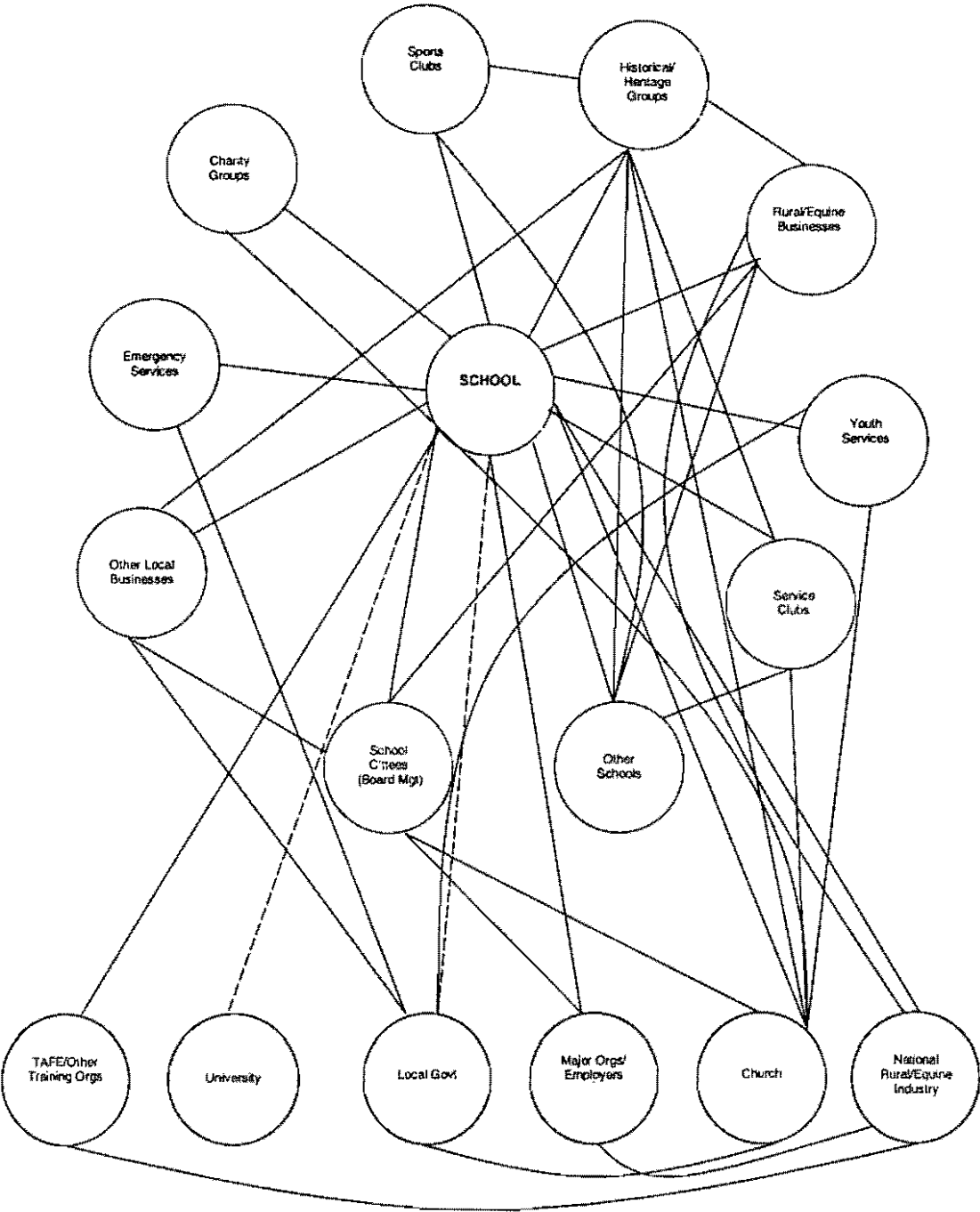


Figure 7: Bridging and linking social capital in Walla Walla



## **The partnership development process**

The five case studies clearly document the process of developing key school–community partnerships in each of the five study sites. The case studies provide detailed information regarding the initiation, development and sustainability of partnerships. This information is provided in the sections describing the development, characteristics and outcomes of major school–community partnerships, and in the discussion of the influence of leadership on partnership development. In particular, the case studies show that most of the partnerships begin with the identification of a problem or opportunity, seek the support of the principal, then gradually involve others, including community opinion leaders, others involved in school governance such as school councils, and representatives of business and community groups.

Because the current study focuses mainly on formalised school–community partnerships, specific details regarding formalisation of the process to reflect the shared and long-term commitment of partners to a common goal, are documented in the case studies. This includes the processes of setting up management committees to represent shared stakeholder interests, and accessing resources and support from sources internal and external to the community to reflect long-term commitment to a common goal.

## **What leadership roles are necessary for the development of school–community partnerships, and what leadership characteristics and attributes are associated with each of these roles?**

### **Leadership roles and stages of the partnership development process**

The five case studies provide extensive information on individuals and groups involved in developing the partnership. In particular, they identify who is involved at various stages of the partnership development process, and describe their specific roles. These roles fall within one of two areas: roles that help to develop the capacity of individuals and groups to allow the partnership to operate effectively, and roles that allow the partnership to achieve its goals. The case studies show that in most cases certain people are involved in most or all stages of partnership development, such as the school principal, while others may be involved only at certain stages. For example, community opinion leaders feature in the early stages of partnership development, while formally appointed partnership coordinators may not become involved until the mid stage of partnership development. Within each case study, findings related to leadership roles and stages of the partnership development process are provided in the sections describing the development, characteristics and outcomes of major school–community partnerships, and in the discussion of the influence of leadership on partnership development.

## **Sharing leadership roles between school and community: Characteristics and attributes of leaders in the partnership development process**

The five case studies document the nature and extent of the specific involvement of the various leaders in the partnership development process, including information on the role of school and community members as leaders. The case studies also document the role of formal and non formal leaders. Formal leaders include the school principal who occupied several roles in relation to partnership development, particularly in relation to supporting and legitimising the partnership, helping to build community support, and nurturing others within school and community to take a leadership role. Other formal leaders were local, State and Commonwealth government officials, who also supported partnerships, particularly at the policy level.

Individuals who did not hold formal leadership positions included staff and students, representatives from business and industry, and representatives from a variety of civic groups. These people undertook a variety of leadership roles. In some cases they acted in an entrepreneurial role to initiate partnerships, and used their networks within and outside the community to build support and access resources, as well as to identify new opportunities for school–community linkages. In each case study there are examples of non formal leaders providing a link between school and community, and facilitating the building of trust between partners.

In addition, each case study provides information on the particular skills, characteristics and attributes that leaders bring to the partnership, including the capacity building skills and risk taking orientation of principals; high level communication and coordination skills of school staff appointed to coordinate partnership activity, and business and industry leaders' networking capabilities that allow them to access resources for the partnership.

Within each case study, detailed findings describing the roles, characteristics and attributes of leaders involved in partnership development, are provided in the sections describing the development, characteristics and outcomes of major school–community partnerships, and in the discussion of the influence of leadership on partnership development.

## **What other factors influence school-community partnerships and what are the impacts of this influence?**

### **Internal factors**

Findings relating to internal school and community factors that influenced partnership development and sustainability included school and community size, the proximity of the school to the community, organisational roles and responsibilities within stakeholder organisations and within the partnerships, and the influence of school public relations. Details of the way in which these factors

influenced partnership development within the study sites are presented in the case studies, in the section on other influencing factors.

The level of maturity of the school–community partnership was also found to be an influencing factor in partnership development. Findings on the different levels of maturity of the school–community partnerships examined, indicating the extent to which partnership culture is embedded with the school and community, are presented in Table 8. As explained in Chapter 3, sites were chosen using a purposive sampling strategy, so as to reflect a range of partnership maturity levels, from early to mature. This table represents a synthesis of findings from the original study and was devised from interview data and researcher observation. It provides a comparison of sites in terms of the extent to which school or community, or school and community, were responsible for initiating and driving partnerships. The table also compares the extent of other influencing factors across the five sites. These factors include organisational roles, responsibilities and decisionmaking processes within stakeholder organisations and within the partnership, school public relations, and the extent to which the school is perceived as a community learning centre.

The study attempted to examine whether there was a link between the level of maturity of the school–community partnership, and the extent to which the mindset of community members is inward or outward in its focus or orientation. In an attempt to assess this inward/outward orientation within each study site, participants were asked to outline what they considered to be the boundaries of their community on a map provided (see Chapter 3 for further details regarding the limitation of these maps). Findings from these maps were collated for each site and are presented in Table 9. A description of the three different community orientations identified—local, extended, and regional—is included as part of Table 9.

Interestingly, findings from Table 9 do not necessarily support the hypothesis that communities with more mature school–community partnerships are more likely to demonstrate an outward or external community mindset. Similarly, communities with less mature school–community partnerships, do not necessarily demonstrate an inward or local community mindset. These findings, however, must be considered in the light of the limitations of the community perception maps used, and need to take into account participant bias, in that not all community sector leaders were interviewed, only those who were in some way involved in school–community partnerships.

**Table 8: Key characteristics of effective school–community partnerships at different levels of maturity**

<b>WALLA WALLA</b>	<b>COOKTOWN</b>	<b>COWELL</b>	<b>MARGARET RIVER</b>	<b>MEANDER</b>
<b>Level of maturity of partnership</b>				
Early	Early to mid	Mid to late	Late	Mature
<b>Initiation of partnership</b>				
All linkages initiated by school	Most linkages initiated by school	Most linkages initiated by community	Linkages initiated equally by school and community	All linkages initiated by community
<b>Extent of school's knowledge and use of community resources</b>				
Building a knowledge base; uses community resources	Building a knowledge base; uses community resources	Adding to a well established knowledge base; uses community resources	Extensive knowledge base within and outside community; extensive use of community resources	Extensive knowledge base within and outside community; extensive use of community resources
<b>Extent of school public relations</b>				
Focus on publicity and marketing external to the community	Focus on publicity, particularly external to community; early stage of developing good public relations within community	Focus on publicity and marketing external to community; developing good public relations within community	High level of publicity and marketing external to community; has developed and continues to build good public relations within community	High level of publicity and marketing external to community; school public relations are subsumed by community public relations
<b>Decision making in school–community partnerships</b>				
Decision making weighted towards the school	Shared decision making between school and community	Decision making sometimes shared between school and community and sometimes weighted towards community	Decision making sometimes shared between school and community and sometimes weighted towards community	Decision making weighted towards the community
<b>Match between level of community empowerment and leadership processes for school–community partnerships</b>				
Community used to direction from others; leadership processes for school–community partnerships mirror this	Community starting to take control for own future; leadership processes for school–community partnerships mirror and contribute to community empowerment by building community capacity	Community used to taking control of its own future; inclusive leadership processes for school–community partnerships mirror and contribute to level of community empowerment by developing capacity to establish and utilise external links	Community controls its own future; leadership processes for school–community partnerships mirror and contribute to level of community empowerment by further developing community capacity	Community controls its own future and is empowered to influence outside authorities; school is integrated into community leadership processes

*(cont'd over)*

Extent to which vision for school–community partnership is shared				
Vision still belongs to formal school leaders	Vision newly shared between school and community	Vision shared between school and community	Vision shared between school and community	School is part of the community's vision
Extent to which school–community partnerships exhibit risk taking and ability to mould opportunities				
Low level of risk taking and opportunity moulding	High level of risk taking and opportunity moulding	High level of risk taking and opportunity moulding	Medium level of risk taking and opportunity moulding	Low level as school and community are reaping the benefits of past risk taking and opportunity moulding activities
Role of community in formal school leadership				
School Board representing church, parent and community interests appointed by the church; Appointed Board has total control	No school council so no formal community involvement in school leadership	Inclusive school council represents interests of all community groups; community Council members elected by parent/community body	Inclusive school council represents interests of most community groups; community Council members elected by parent/community body	Inclusive school council represents interests of all community groups; community Council members elected by parent/community body
Extent to which community resources are valued				
No evidence at this stage	Some community members see themselves as valuable learning resources	Some community members see themselves as valuable learning resources	Community members see themselves as valuable learning resources	Community members proactive in learning of school and community
Extent to which community perceive school as a learning centre				
No evidence at this stage	Limited evidence; indications of developing perceptions	Most groups within the community view the school as a learning centre	Certain groups (e.g. business), but not the whole community, view the school as a learning centre* *Most likely because this site has a number of other learning facilities, whereas smaller communities the school is the only learning facility	All groups within the community view the school as a learning centre

Acknowledgment: This table was developed by Sue Kilpatrick and Susan Johns, and was included as Table 7 in Chapter 9 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation who funded this research.

**Table 9: Community orientation derived from individuals' perceptions**

Site	Local community perception	Extended community perception	Regional community perception	Total*
Cooktown	12	10	10	32
Cowell	24	4	2	30
Margaret River	26	40	9	75
Meander	6	6	8	20
Walla Walla	3	15	4	22 <sup>§</sup>

*Local community:* Includes the immediate location of the interviewee, and surrounding areas within an approximate 20 km radius.

*Extended community:* Includes the immediate location of the interviewee, plus one or more neighbouring communities in a similar geographical area, which have regular contact and interaction. In some cases (e.g. Cowell), extended community was represented by those communities engaged in a formal or informal school cluster arrangement. In others, the extended community was determined to be similar to the local government boundaries (e.g. in Margaret River).

*Regional community:* Includes the area encompassed by the extended community, as well as one or more communities further afield but still within the same broad geographical region. In most cases, the regional community included at least one regional population centre with a population of 2000 or more. In some cases, the regional perception of community was represented by the corresponding local government area (e.g. the Meander Valley local government area). In other cases, the regional community was represented by a combination of two local government areas with similar or complementary sources of economic activity (e.g. the Augusta-Margaret River and Busselton Shire Councils together comprise the South-West region of Western Australia in which Margaret River is located, and represent the regional community indicated by some respondents).

**Notes:**

\* Not all individuals interviewed in each site provided details of their perception of community. For this reason, these numbers differ slightly from the total number of interviewees per site.

<sup>§</sup> An additional respondent conceived of community as extending outside regional boundaries to include other regions of NSW, other States of Australia, and several overseas countries. This reflects the wide drawing area of St Paul's boarding school. As this was the perception of one individual only, an additional category was not warranted.

## **The influence of policy and other external factors**

Findings relating to the influence of policy and other external factors on the development and sustainability of school–community partnerships are presented in the case studies in the section on other influencing factors. Each case study describes the influence of policy on the various stages of partnership development, indicating whether the influence was positive or negative. Where policy influences were negative, the case studies also outline how these were, or are currently being, dealt with. In all case studies, department of education and other education and training organisation policies are identified as having considerable influence on partnerships. The widespread influence



of education and training organisation policy is to be expected, given that VET in schools partnerships in all sites except for Meander, were one of the key school–community partnerships examined. The policies of other State and Commonwealth government departments are also identified in most case studies as influencing the development of other school–community partnerships, and again, these influences were largely positive, as documented in the case studies.

## **Summary**

The five case studies represent the major source of findings for the current study, supplemented by the social capital network diagrams, the synthesis of characteristics of school–community partnerships at different stages of maturity, and the table and explanatory notes reporting findings from the community perception maps. The case studies have been written as stand alone documents, each containing narrative description, discussion of the issues relating to school–community partnership development, and implications for the future. Readers are encouraged to read the five case studies in Appendix G before continuing to Chapter 5. This is because the discussion and conclusions presented in Chapter 5 relate to cross-case analyses undertaken by the writer, and a prior understanding of each case is necessary to ensure that generalisations are not made that overlook the specific context of each case.

## Chapter 5

# Discussion and conclusions<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

The findings presented in the five case studies (see Appendix G), and in the preceding chapter, indicate that rural school–community linkages deliver a variety of positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes for youth, and also for the community. They also confirm findings by Coleman and Hoffer (1987) and Jolly and Deloney (1996) that identify high levels of social capital (particularly bonding social capital), and the existence of a functional community (in which adults take an interest in and accept responsibility for children other than their own), are prerequisites for building effective school–community partnerships. This study is particularly interested in the process through which the capacity of individuals and communities to influence their own futures is increased, through the development of school–community partnerships. Findings indicate that the process of building social capital encourages communities to combine their skills and knowledge in order to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, therefore confirming findings into the role of social capital in realising human potential (see, for example, Falk & Kilpatrick 2000; OECD 2001a). In particular, the study supports Barker's (1997) and Lane and Dorfman's (1997) research that found the process of developing community leadership to be synonymous with the community development process.

Complementary to and building particularly upon research by Lane and Dorfman (1997), discussion in this chapter will present and analyse the partnership development process as a series of stages that progressively contribute to the building of bridging and linking social capital (Woolcock 1999) or cross cutting ties (Stone & Hughes 2001) within rural communities. Such ties have been identified as important to the sustainability of rural communities, with research identifying that rural communities in general have lower levels of cross cutting ties than urban communities (Onyx & Bullen 2001; Stone & Hughes 2001). The chapter will also discuss how leadership roles at each stage of the

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter draws in part on discussion written by Susan Johns, which formed Chapters 9 and 10 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b). Approximately 25% of the material is taken from the original discussion. The significant difference is that presentation and discussion of the following topics is new to this chapter: bonding, bridging and linking and social capital; Figure 8 on the process of building and social capital through school–community partnership development; identification and discussion of the critical reflection stage of partnership development; Table 11 on leadership process, roles and sources and related discussion; implications of this study, and conclusions. Other discussion contained in sections on the partnership development process; leadership roles, characteristics and attributes, and influencing factors, expands and develops the material presented in the original report. Co-authors of the original report, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Professor Bill Mulford, and Ms Libby Prescott, all from the University of Tasmania, and Professor Ian Falk from the Northern Territory University, attest to the fact that Susan Johns is the sole author of all material contained in this chapter.

partnership development process contribute to the building of community social capital, and will assess the influence of other internal and external factors on building community social capital through school–community partnerships. Throughout the chapter, evidence will be provided to support the claim by a number of researchers (see, for example, Glen et al. 1992; Miller 1991, 1995; Reynolds 1995; Jolly & Deloney 1996; Lane & Dorfman 1997; Bowie 1998; Johns et al. 2000a, b & c; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b) that rural school–community partnerships play a vital role in community development.

As already noted, most of the school–community linkages reviewed in this study that will form the basis of discussion in this chapter, relate to the planning and implementation of specific and relatively formal programs linking school to community, such as the development of a VET in schools program, or a community online access centre, or an environmental project. In this sense they may be defined as partnerships, in that they represent *collaborations characterised by the shared and long-term commitment of a diverse group of members to achieving a common goal* (the researcher's own definition in Chapter 2). Most of these partnerships have been influenced to a large extent by external funding regimes, and the associated requirements in terms of partnership structure, reporting requirements, and timelines. By focusing on formal partnerships, this in no way suggests that informal school–community linkages, such as sharing of school facilities and resources, are of less importance. In fact, evidence from the case study sites illustrates that schools which have a balance between formal and informal linkages are well positioned to make extensive contributions to their communities. However, as noted in Chapter 2, recent years have seen a growing number of schools and communities enter into more formalised relationships, through specifically designed and frequently ongoing partnerships, which are supported at the policy level. It is argued that these partnerships are critical to community development because of their long-term focus in terms of resourcing and institutional commitment. Therefore, this discussion will focus specifically on issues related to the development of such partnerships.

The following three sections will answer the major research question, and two minor research questions, respectively. Implications of the study for the development and sustainability of effective rural school–community partnerships will then be presented, including implications for further research. Drawing on key findings from the study, the conclusion will place school–community partnerships firmly at the forefront of rural community development in the future.

## **How do school and community leadership processes influence rural community development through school–community partnerships?**

The schools in this study were purposively selected as examples of effective school–community partnerships, albeit at different stages of development (see Chapter 3 for further details re site selection). As the five case studies (Appendix G) clearly indicate, with the possible exception of Walla Walla, the communities could all be described as proactive in determining their own futures, with a number of strategies in place to build capacity within their communities. The building of school–community partnerships was one of these strategies. In the case of Walla Walla, there is evidence to suggest that the school, through forging multiple partnerships within and beyond the community, is one of the key players leading change within its community. The schools in the five study sites have played and continue to play an important role in helping to build and sustain community social capital, by providing opportunities for interaction, fostering networks that span different sectors of the community, and by modelling ‘shared learning and teamwork as well as openness to new ideas and cultural diversity’ (OECD 2001a, p. 46). These findings are consistent with research which highlights the particular role of schools and other learning institutions in sustaining social capital (see, for example, Lane & Dorfman 1997; OECD 2001a).

### **Bonding, bridging and linking social capital**

#### *Bonding social capital as a foundation for building school–community partnerships*

In terms of assessing the impact of the school on community social capital, there is evidence that within each of the communities, levels of what Woolcock (1999) described as bonding social capital (trust between family, friends, neighbours, work mates, or between people of similar backgrounds such as ethnic groups) were relatively high. In Walla Walla, this was based around shared values and beliefs relating to the Lutheran background of many community members. In the other four sites, there was evidence of strong bonding social capital within each of the often disparate community groups. For example, environmentalists in Meander were a key force, united in their (often successful) efforts to stop what they perceived as destructive natural resource management practices. In other sites, community and business groups also appeared to be proactive in effecting change through collaborative action. For example, the youth advisory council in Margaret River had been responsible for implementing a number of initiatives for youth, including a skate park, while in Cooktown a community group formed under the title of NOCOG (Not the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games) successfully organised a mock Olympic torch relay, to both protest at being bypassed by the official Olympic torch relay and to raise much-needed funds for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. In Cowell, the swimming club had played a major role in increasing community use of the community’s only swimming pool, thus ensuring its viability.

In particular, the case studies also indicate relatively high levels of bonding social capital within the five focal schools. This is illustrated by the extent of organisational learning and distributive leadership practices reported. Utilising the sub scales of organisational learning for schools identified by Silins and Mulford (2002), there is evidence within each school of a trusting and collaborative climate, a shared and monitored mission, freedom and willingness to take risks and new initiatives, and ongoing, relevant and challenging professional development. For example, in Meander a parent and school council member describes the level of trust within the school as being related to 'a heap of transparencies, nothing's hidden ... [the principal] values people's opinions and experiences ...', while in Margaret River the VET coordinator explains that 'it's expected that if you're dealing with an issue then you network it [with other staff] and get as much input as you can'. Evidence of a shared and monitored mission is exemplified in the comment from the parents and citizens (P & C) chairperson in Margaret River when he says 'there is a sense of shared vision that the school is very important in this community and of course hence the reciprocal'. In Walla Walla, the freedom to risk take is illustrated in the actions of the agriculture teacher in building a linkage between the school and a national seed company. The teacher was 'the main inspiration behind it, [he] just likes to take the ball and run with it, so it means it's good to be given a really good run'. Freedom to risk take has encouraged staff such as the art teacher in Cowell, the maths/materials, design and technology teacher in Margaret River, and the materials, design and technology and learning support teachers in Cooktown, to initiate and develop a variety of programs beyond their normal classroom duties.

Although it was beyond the scope of this study to formally measure levels of bonding social capital within the community, evidence of the extent and outcomes of bonding social capital presented in the five case studies supports research (Onyx & Bullen 2001; Stone & Hughes 2001) that found relatively high levels of bonding social capital in rural communities. However, it must be noted that both Onyx and Bullen, and Stone and Hughes, derived their measures of bonding social capital from a comparison between rural and urban communities, which was beyond the scope of this study. Specifically within Margaret River and Walla Walla, and to a lesser extent, in Cowell, the strength of bonding social capital is not surprising given that many of these groups could be described as homogeneous in terms of ethnicity and culture, often a feature of a number of rural civic and community groups (Stone & Hughes 2001). Each of the case studies suggests that the existence of relatively high levels of trust within community groups, and particularly within the schools, contributed to the development of school-community partnerships, confirming Falk and Kilpatrick's (2000) model that presents trust as both a source and outcome of social capital.

### *The role of rural school–community partnerships in building bridging and linking social capital*

This study is particularly interested in assessing the extent of bridging and linking social capital in the five rural communities studied, and the role of the school in helping to build these cross cutting ties (Stone & Hughes 2001). Using a network-based approach to measuring social capital (Flora & Flora 1993; CRLRA 2000, 2001; Black & Hughes 2001; Sharp 2001; Stone & Hughes 2002), the network diagrams presented in Chapter 4 (Figures 3–7) place the school in a central position in terms of facilitating extensive bridging and linking ties in each of the five communities. It needs to be noted that the focus of this study was on the school, hence its central position in Figures 3–7. Had the focus of the study been different (for example, if the focus had been on the role of local government in rural community development), then the school may not necessarily have featured in the central position.

Drawing on the definition of bridging ties or generalised trust presented in Stone and Hughes (2001; 2002), there is evidence within each of the five network diagrams of extensive bridging ties between diverse individuals and civic groups, such as sporting, environmental, arts and cultural, community and welfare groups, and service clubs. The network diagrams show that the school in each community is a central player in helping to facilitate these linkages across the community. Bridging ties are important in promoting tolerance of diversity (Stone & Hughes 2001), and there are many examples from the case studies of the effectiveness of school–community partnerships in promoting tolerance by actively seeking out and bringing together individuals and groups who traditionally may not have had links with the school or with each other. For example, in Walla Walla, the pastor of the Lutheran St Paul's College set about building positive relationships with pastors from other nearby parishes, and with ministers from other denominations. In Meander, despite conflict and diversity of opinion over environmental issues, the school as a common and intentionally neutral meeting place provides a 'third space'<sup>2</sup> where differing values and beliefs can be explored.

The building of bridging ties is facilitated by a collaborative form of leadership (Chrislip & Larson 1994), characterised by individuals and groups from various community sectors learning to work together, and is supported by organisational learning (Senge et al. 1999) and team formation (Cardno 1999; Hackman 2002) research on the positive role of creative conflict in developing the capacity of individuals and groups. The process involves a good deal of time, building trust amongst stakeholders so individual values and attitudes can be examined, and the beginnings of a shared vision established. The effectiveness of this strategy in terms of community development is supported by research which indicates that active relationships involving interactions that cross role

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<sup>2</sup> The name 'Third Space' was given to a Faculty of Education research higher degree student forum at the University of Tasmania, designed to facilitate reflection and dialogue amongst the Faculty's diverse postgraduate student body. The forum, which met monthly, is in recess at the present time.

boundaries have the greatest potential for sustainable community development (Lane & Dorfman 1997; OECD 2001).

Not surprisingly, the most complex set of bridging ties exist within the largest site, Margaret River, where the school has links with nearly every industry, business, and civic and community group. The school has also played a role in facilitating these linkages, partly due to the personal involvement of the principal and the chair of the parents and citizens (P & C) association in a number of these groups, such as service and sports clubs, and local business, and partly due to the practice of the principal in actively involving representatives from these various groups in school decisionmaking. For example, the management of the VET in schools program (which is called structured workplace learning in the case study), included representatives from local business, and the business enterprise centre; while the school management group included representatives from local business and the health sector. Significantly, Margaret River and also Meander are the two communities characterised by greatest diversity in terms of the range of community groups and interests represented. In both sites it has been the school that has broken down barriers between the groups and encouraged greater collaboration. In Margaret River the catalyst was a strongly held community belief that the school should be accorded senior high school status; in Meander, it was the threat of school closure.

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings from this study is the role of rural schools in helping to build linking ties, or what Stone and Hughes (2001, 2002) refer to as institutional ties. Using Stone and Hughes' classification framework, institutional ties include links with individuals or organisations that have power and influence, and include the legal system, police force, churches, the media, governments, political parties, universities, and major businesses. Referring to the network diagrams in Chapter 4 (Figures 3–7), there is evidence that each of the five study sites has developed a range of linking ties, although the extent of these ties varies considerably. All sites report links between schools and local government, and all except Walla Walla report strong links between the school and State and Commonwealth governments. In some sites, local government linkages with the school are strong and ongoing, particularly in Cooktown, Cowell and Margaret River. In Cooktown and Cowell, in particular, these linkages proved beneficial to the school and community, in terms of facilitating the development of their VET in schools partnerships. In Margaret River, the local government linkage through the youth advisory council played a role in addressing issues of youth alienation and disengagement within the wider community, and in promoting greater intergenerational trust. Interestingly, in the two sites (Meander and Walla Walla) where the seat of local government was located in another community, the links between school and local government were not reported to be as strong as in the other three sites. However, in Walla Walla there was a clear move to strengthen those linkages through the developing community-wide youth intern program, under the leadership of the school pastor.

Four sites reported extensive links with State and Commonwealth governments as part of their school operation. For example, in Meander, Commonwealth government funding and support had been responsible for the development of a community online access centre within the school. Cooktown's strong links with State and Commonwealth education and training bodies had resulted in the development of an innovative VET in schools program, *Step Ahead*, to address school absenteeism and low school retention rates. Not surprisingly, in Walla Walla there were fewer direct links between the school and State and Commonwealth government departments, given that the school was a Lutheran college, controlled by a local board of management under the auspices of the Lutheran church nationally. Interestingly, this school boasted strong State and national rural and equine industry linkages, as well as strong State and national church linkages, more so than any of the other schools within our study, which may in part have replaced Commonwealth and State government linkages.

A key finding from the study is that most of the communities had developed linking ties with one or several big businesses or major companies, and that schools were involved in facilitating and sustaining these partnerships. In some cases the school had been responsible for initiating the linkage, as in the case of St Paul's at Walla Walla, who had entered into a partnership with a major national seed production company as part of its agricultural studies program. In other cases, schools were key players in sustaining business and industry linkages, for example in Cowell, where the VET in schools program is linked to the leading edge aquaculture industry in the community, and to the national aquaculture industry. These partnerships with big business, major companies and industries are important in rural areas, which traditionally have reported lower levels of such linkages than urban communities (Stone & Hughes 2001). As Stone and Hughes noted, the significance of these linkages lies in the fact that they represent 'important mechanisms for establishing and maintaining investment, industry and finance in rural Australia' (2001, p. 11).

Stone and Hughes (2001, 2002) identified partnerships between rural communities and tertiary institutions as a key source of linking social capital, although their research showed that these linkages are less common in rural communities compared with urban communities. The network diagrams presented in Chapter 4 indicate that although four of the five school-community partnerships reported formal linkages with a regional university, half of these linkages could be described as weak in that they were informal and not ongoing. The strongest university link was in Margaret River, and related to the proposed development of a wine centre of excellence, that included a number of partners such as the school, local TAFE<sup>3</sup>, and a regional university. Meander's university linkages related to several school staff and parents who had completed or were completing

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<sup>3</sup> TAFE=Technical and Further Education. This is the term used to describe one of the major Commonwealth government-funded institutions providing vocational education and training throughout Australia.



university study, and who were using their knowledge to foster lifelong learning within the community. However, in most sites except for Meander, stronger and more extensive linkages were reported with the vocational education and training sector (either with TAFE or another registered training organisation (RTO)). The schools in Cooktown, Cowell and Walla Walla were instrumental in initiating these linkages as part of their VET in schools programs. These linkages have proved particularly beneficial not only to students but to the wider community in each of these three sites, given that there had previously been no regular, ongoing TAFE presence in these sites due to their small size. Particularly interesting is the role of St Paul's College in Walla Walla. This school disregarded the constraints of State-based education and training systems that may have had a greater influence on State government schools, by accessing TAFE courses across two different States to best meet the needs of students and the community.

Overall, the network diagrams indicate evidence of both bridging and linking social capital within the five study sites, associated to varying extents with the development of school–community partnerships. This is not to say that the schools have been solely responsible for forging these partnerships, although there is evidence to suggest that the school in Walla Walla has played a major initiating role in broadening that community's outlook and horizons, and in attracting external recognition and funding to the community. Certainly the network diagrams and case studies indicate that each of the five focal schools has played a role in the development and sustainability of the linking or institutional ties documented. The implications of this for rural communities are important, in that 'cross-cutting ties are argued to be those types of connections that may best enable rural/remote centres to manage *and influence* [authors' original emphasis] the nature of external pressures, including changes to the economy, in addition to increasing community capacity to manage the effects of these externalities locally' (Stone & Hughes 2001, p. 17). The process of exactly how rural schools help in developing these cross cutting ties, through the development of school–community partnerships, will be discussed in the following section.

### **The partnership development process**

Indications from the case studies clearly show that leadership within the school and community, based on principles of inclusivity and an openness to new ideas, not only develops individual capacity, but also fosters collective activity through teamwork and network building—in short, such leadership builds social capital. The remainder of this discussion will focus on leadership that facilitates the partnership development process, drawing heavily on community development literature that describes the process as one of 'learning about how groups learn and share their knowledge about projects' (Hill & Moore 2002, p. 19). Specifically it will analyse the process of building community social capital within rural communities, using the development of school–community partnerships as the unit of analysis.

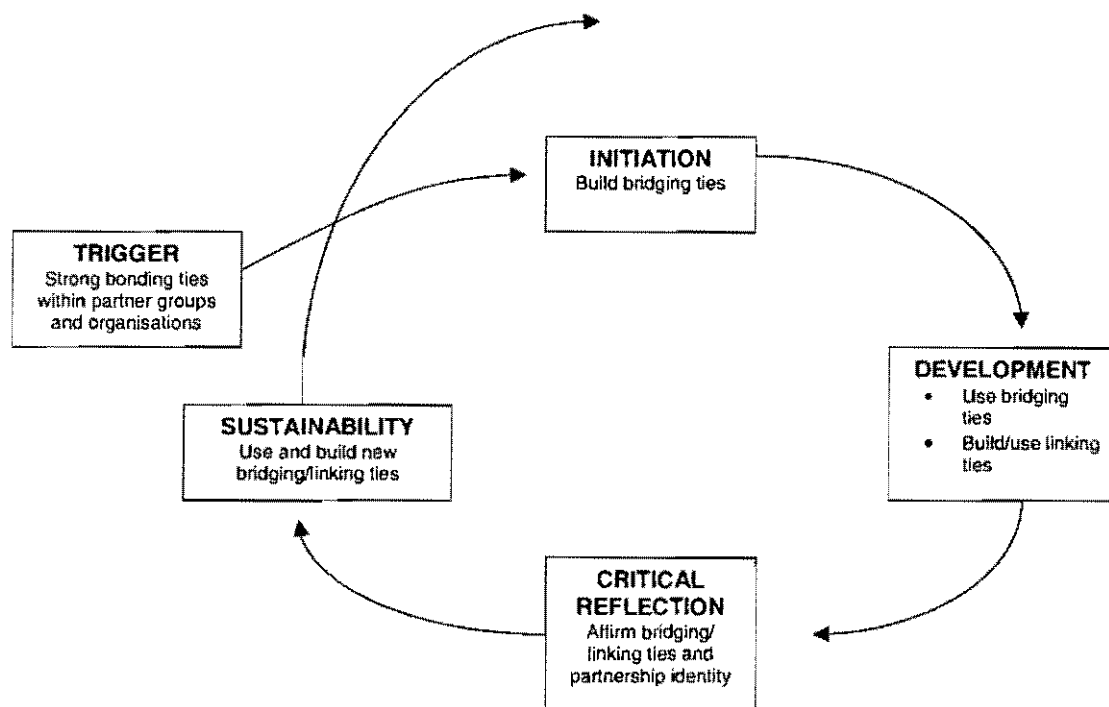
Analysis of the data from each study site indicates that the process of implementing school–community partnerships is cyclical rather than linear, and is comprised of a number of stages, representing a shift from individualistic concerns and informal and relatively unstructured relationships between stakeholders, to a collective focus and more formalised and structured relationships later in the process. These findings are consistent with other partnership lifecycle research, from both the education and training (Kearns, Murphy & Villiers 1996; Shimeld 2001a; Falk & Smith 2003) and community development sectors (Wilkinson 1991; Lane & Dorfman 1997; Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997). They build closely on the work of Kilpatrick et al. (2002b; see, in particular, their model reproduced as Figure 2 in Chapter 2 of this dissertation). The findings are also consistent with research on the developmental stages of group formation (Tuckman 1965; Mulford et al. 1981; Mulford 2002).

#### *The five stage leadership model*

This study builds on Falk and Smith's (2003) four-stage model, and on Kilpatrick et al's (2002b) model of partnership development which proposed a five-stage process: trigger, initiation, development, maintenance and sustainability. Specifically, it contributes new knowledge to our understanding of the partnership development process, by developing Kilpatrick et al's (2002b) model in two areas: it broadens the scope of the maintenance stage to one of critical reflection, and links each of the five stages to the use and/or development of bonding, bridging and linking social capital. The new and expanded model and explanatory notes are provided in Figure 8 on the following page, and will form the basis of the discussion in this section. It needs to be recognised that this is a theoretical model and that, in reality, there is some overlap between the stages at which bridging and linking social capital are built and used. However, the model is a useful tool for analysing the developmental process of social capital building through school–community partnerships.

Reconceptualising the maintenance stage of partnership development as one of critical reflection links with the transforming stage of group formation (Mulford et al. 1981; Mulford 2002) and denotes a specific stage during which groups seek feedback about their performance and determine to make changes accordingly (Mulford 2002). However, the difference between the current model and Mulford's stages of group formation lies in Mulford's conception of dorming (maintenance) and transforming (critical reflection) as two separate stages. Findings from the case studies suggest that these actions are interdependent, in that reflection tends to take place only when the partnership is running smoothly or 'coasting' (Mulford 2002), suggesting it is more appropriate to incorporate maintenance into the critical reflection stage.

**Figure 8: Process of building and using social capital through school–community partnership development**



### **Trigger**

Problem/opportunity for school/community is identified by one or a small number of individuals and discussed with like minded others. Evidence of strong bonding social capital within partner groups and organisations (particularly within schools) at this stage supports individuals to continue to the initiation stage.

### **Initiation**

Informal process of building generalised trust (bridging social capital), by bringing together diverse individuals and community groups, with similar concerns/goals, to identify knowledge and identity resources (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000) available. The first stage of transferring leadership of the process to the partnership.

### **Development**

Formal process through which knowledge and identity resources of individuals are used to access resources, build structures and processes, determine roles and responsibilities, and build a common purpose (shared vision) for the partnership. The process uses generalised trust (bridging social capital) to build institutional trust (linking social capital).

### **Critical Reflection**

Formal process of reflection by the partnership on the value and outcomes of collective action; and on the extent and outcomes of generalised (bridging social capital) and institutional (linking social capital) trust. The final stage in transferring leadership to the partnership—affirmation of partnership identity. This process takes place once the partnership has begun to achieve its original goals, and often includes recognition and celebration of partnership successes.

### **Sustainability**

This process builds on the critical reflection stage. Formal process of reviewing/renewing partnership goals, and scanning the horizon for new opportunities/threats, reflecting the continuous learning focus of the partnership. The process draws on existing social capital that has been built, and also identifies and builds new bridging and linking social capital as needed.

By way of illustration, the five-stage model has been applied to one school–community partnership in each of the five case study sites, in Table 10<sup>4</sup>. Discussion in the remainder of this chapter will draw on the partnership summaries in Table 10, and on other examples of school–community partnerships from the case studies, in order to illustrate the process of building and using social capital through partnership development. It needs to be noted that in Table 10, ‘parents’ are not identified as having a role in the school–community partnerships examined. However, parents were very much involved in many of the partnerships, but in specific capacities. For example, the oyster grower who initiated the VET in schools program in Cowell was also a parent and a school council member, while the relief teacher/school council member who initiated the online access centre partnership in Meander was a parent also. In addition, there were parents on the management committees of each of the partnerships examined in Table 10.

The leadership process in implementing school–community linkages begins with the *trigger* stage, which relates to the identification of a problem or opportunity that impacts on or is likely to impact on both school and community. Triggers may come from two sources: external (for example, a policy initiative such as the government cadets in high schools initiative described in the Margaret River case study), or internal (for example, a community problem such as the need to provide local employment opportunities for youth through an industry-specific VET in schools program, described in the Cowell case study). As discussed in the previous section on ‘Bonding, bridging and linking social capital’, evidence from the case studies indicates that the trigger stage occurs when levels of bonding social capital are strong, particularly within schools and most likely within relevant community groups. It is the strength of bonding social capital (indicated, for example, by the level of organisational learning evident within each focal school) that supports individuals at the trigger stage to follow through to the initiation stage.

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<sup>4</sup> Table 10 is an adaptation of Table 6 that appeared in Chapter 9 of the original report (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b). The original table was devised by Sue Kilpatrick and Susan Johns. For each partnership it includes additional material denoting the critical reflection stage, not present in Kilpatrick et al’s model. Table 10 also expands on material contained in the sustainability stage, to better reflect the link between critical reflection and sustainability that will be discussed later, and includes additional material on internal and external factors influencing partnership development.

**TABLE 10: Analysis of the leadership process in relation to five different school–community partnerships**

**Cooktown VET in schools program (*Step Ahead*)**

Stage	Leaders	Leadership process	Other influencing factors
<i>Trigger</i> (problem/opportunity identification)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify need</li> <li>involve principal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teachers' vision</li> <li>two teachers with conflicting views on how to implement solution to problem</li> </ul>
<i>Initiation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>principal and 2 teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>support of principal for idea</li> <li>support of principal for two conflicting teachers</li> <li>develop people and facilitate them to follow through with their ideas</li> <li>involve community opinion leaders</li> <li>build on existing networks/ access external networks</li> <li>interpersonal communication</li> <li>begin to develop vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>openness of principal, school and community to new ideas and willingness to take risks</li> </ul>
<i>Development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 teachers</li> <li>community opinion leaders</li> <li>principal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>locate and access resources</li> <li>gain trust and support of stakeholders</li> <li>come to share the vision, especially with employers</li> <li>deliberate inclusive community involvement</li> <li>work with external stakeholders</li> <li>formalisation of school–community partnership (committee)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>meetings held in community, not school</li> <li>time spent vetting employers and students to ensure they shared the vision</li> <li>external stakeholders also prepared to risk take</li> </ul>
<i>Critical Reflection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>management committee</li> <li>VET coordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on-going liaison between stakeholders through management committee</li> <li>continued high level of commitment by stakeholders</li> <li>reflection on and celebration of successes internally and externally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State education department assisted with publicity (State and national)</li> <li>formal and regular celebration of partnership successes (e.g. annual presentation night)</li> </ul>
<i>Sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>management committee</li> <li>VET coordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>looking for new opportunities (school-based apprentices)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>coordinator a community, not teacher/school, person (boundary crosser)</li> <li>publicity of success</li> </ul>

## Cowell VET in schools program (aquaculture)

Stage	Leaders	Leadership process	Other influencing factors
<i>Trigger</i> (problem/opportunity identification)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>oyster grower</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify opportunity</li> <li>approach principal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>oyster grower on school council</li> <li>oyster grower's vision</li> </ul>
<i>Initiation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>principal and deputy principal</li> <li>oyster grower</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>support of principal/deputy principal</li> <li>manage process of reconciling competing values and shaping values appropriate to vision</li> <li>inclusive, involving all stakeholders (including students)</li> <li>build on existing community attitudes and values using community networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>oyster grower had external links (to TAFE and university)</li> <li>openness of principal/school to new ideas; prepared to risk take</li> <li>stage took several years</li> <li>lack of continuity of school staff (and incongruence between values of school and some staff) slowed process</li> </ul>
<i>Development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>management committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>inclusive community involvement on committee</li> <li>two-way communication channels</li> <li>locate resources including external funding</li> <li>match community leadership and management style (by committee) with project management style</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>second, more inclusive, committee took ownership of program (name changed from aquaculture committee to aquaculture board of management)</li> </ul>
<i>Critical Reflection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>management committee</li> <li>aquaculture liaison officer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>communication and linking</li> <li>look to others with similar experiences (Cleve school)</li> <li>involve additional diverse internal and external stakeholders</li> <li>publicise partnership successes widely (internally/externally)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>school actively sought publicity outside school/community (e.g. field days, State media exposure)</li> <li>when sustainability threatened, process returned to initiation</li> </ul>
<i>Sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>new management committee</li> <li>aquaculture liaison officer</li> <li>principal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reaffirming networks and goals</li> <li>scanning for new opportunities and problems related to aquaculture</li> <li>seeking and acting on feedback from stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>publicity assists sustainability and external willingness to be involved and fund project</li> </ul>

## Margaret River VET in schools program (structured workplace learning)

Stage	Leaders	Leadership process	Other influencing factors
<i>Trigger</i> (problem/opportunity identification)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VET coordinator</li> <li>business enterprise centre facilitator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify opportunity that fitted with school philosophy and new direction for business enterprise centre</li> <li>approach principal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>common timing of opportunity and business enterprise centre refocusing</li> <li>vision of principal shared by teachers</li> </ul>
<i>Initiation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VET coordinator</li> <li>business enterprise centre facilitator</li> <li>principal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>support of formal school leadership</li> <li>recognise common purpose of school and community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>openness of principal and business enterprise centre facilitator to new ideas and willingness to take risks</li> </ul>
<i>Development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VET coordinator</li> <li>business enterprise centre facilitator</li> <li>committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>access funding using external networks</li> <li>gain trust and support of stakeholders</li> <li>involve all stakeholders</li> <li>formalisation of process</li> <li>develop people; facilitate them to follow through with ideas</li> <li>come to share a standard of excellence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gaining trust and support of stakeholders especially important because VET coordinator was new to community</li> <li>much time spent building structures and processes for partnership operation—strong business focus</li> </ul>
<i>Critical Reflection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VET coordinator</li> <li>employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>empower all stakeholders to take control rather than management committee</li> <li>collaborative problem solving</li> <li>share program successes amongst stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>stakeholders have taken control and program is self-managing</li> <li>formal celebration of partnership successes (e.g. annual presentation night)</li> </ul>
<i>Sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VET coordinator</li> <li>employers</li> <li>principal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>look out for threats and opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>external threat from State education department forced partnership to this stage</li> </ul>

## Meander online access centre

Stage	Leaders	Leadership process	Other influencing factors
<i>Trigger</i> (problem/opportunity identification)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>school council member/relief teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify opportunity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>boundary crosser with external networks</li> <li>vision of school council member/relief teacher</li> <li>understanding of school and community values and vision</li> <li>availability of State/Commonwealth funding and support</li> </ul>
<i>Initiation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>school council member</li> <li>principal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>take initiative in principal's absence</li> <li>support of principal</li> <li>approach school staff then school council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>established way of working, and community vision where school is at centre of community, helped at this stage</li> <li>openness of principal and community to new ideas and willingness to take risks</li> </ul>
<i>Development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>school council member</li> <li>management committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gain support of stakeholders (build common purpose around identified opportunity)</li> <li>access external resources</li> <li>formalise leadership with a committee (mainly community members)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>boundary crosser had credibility in community</li> <li>previously established ability to work as inclusive school/community team</li> </ul>
<i>Critical Reflection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>coordinator</li> <li>management committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure opportunities provided for all sections of community to use centre (awareness raising), especially non-users</li> <li>communication and linking</li> <li>reflection on vulnerability of centre due to leadership succession and resourcing issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>coordinator is original initiator (boundary crosser)</li> <li>committee's role mainly to support centre coordinator</li> <li>publicity</li> </ul>
<i>Sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>coordinator</li> <li>principal</li> <li>mgt committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seek opportunities to ensure continuity of management and financial viability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>utilise existing school administrative structure to ensure sustainability</li> </ul>



## Walla Walla youth intern initiative

Stage	Leaders	Leadership process	Other influencing factors
<i>Trigger</i> (problem/opportunity identification)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pastor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify problem</li> <li>• identify Lutheran church resources</li> <li>• identify boarding house resource</li> <li>• discuss idea with principal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pastor's external networks</li> <li>• pastor's vision</li> </ul>
<i>Initiation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pastor</li> <li>• principal and school board of management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• involve local government and other pastors</li> <li>• support of school board of management and principal</li> <li>• support people and facilitate them to follow through with their ideas</li> <li>• build common purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pastor's idea fitted with philosophy of school</li> <li>• pastor's local networks</li> <li>• openness of principal and board to new ideas and willingness to take risks</li> </ul>
<i>Development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pastor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• formalisation of partnership</li> <li>• locate and access resources</li> </ul>	
<i>Critical Reflection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pastor</li> <li>• management committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise success of program within school</li> <li>• success of program motivates pastor to work with others to develop broader vision for the partnership</li> <li>• communication and linking</li> </ul>	
<i>Sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pastor</li> <li>• management committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seek new opportunities to expand initiative to other localities</li> <li>• strengthen links with local council and other parishes</li> <li>• mentor youth interns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• resources provided by church, school and local government</li> </ul>

The trigger stage is followed by *initiation*, in which informal processes come into play in order to mobilise school and community resources to address the problem or opportunity. During the initiation stage community stakeholders in the proposed change are identified and informal relationships between stakeholders are built, for example, through community meetings. This is the stage during which attention is paid to the building of bridging social capital that will form the basis for collective action in subsequent stages. This is very much a period of testing out the extent to which values and attitudes are or might be shared between community stakeholders, in order to determine whether the partnership will work. This confirms other research (Lane & Dorfman 1997; Kilpatrick et al. 2002b; James & St. Leger 2003) that has found the development of shared goals and vision a key determinant of later partnership success and sustainability. It is at this early stage of the process that the seeds of collaborative leadership (Chrislip & Larson 1994) are sown, in that potential champions of the initiative are sought, discussion to establish common purpose takes place, and the commitment of stakeholders to the proposed change is gradually built. This process links closely with the first of Fawcett et al.'s (1995) enabling activities for community empowerment—enhancing experience and competence. The building of bridging social capital at the initiation stages is clearly illustrated in the amount of time taken to initiate the VET in schools partnership in Cooktown, and to consult with and develop linkages with each of the stakeholder groups, and is also evident in the initiation of the VET in schools partnerships in Cowell and Margaret River. In Cooktown, in particular, the building of bridging social capital amongst Indigenous groups was particularly important in building their confidence in public education (MCEETYA 2000a and b; Schwab & Sutherland 2001), evidenced by the comment from an Indigenous leader that 'Cooktown school has done a lot for the Indigenous people, Indigenous kids, and I'm pretty proud of Cooktown school ...'.

What distinguishes partnership development from more traditional forms of leadership is the lack of existing procedures or structures to govern the partnership, and the need to develop these structures as the partnership develops. It is at the *development* stage that these structures and processes are developed and formalised, including the location and accessing of resources. In the Cooktown case study, for example, a good deal of time and attention was given to matters such as the location and structure of partnership meetings. It was decided to hold meetings in the community and not within the school, as an overt symbol of community ownership of the partnership, and reflective of the lack of dominance of school-imposed structures and procedures which may have alienated certain community sectors, particularly the Indigenous groups. These actions accord with the partnership enabling strategies identified by Fawcett et al. (1995), specifically, the need to remove social and environmental barriers to partnership development. At this stage, relationships between the stakeholders become more structured, often in the form of a management committee convened due to funding body requirements. These more formal relationships and structures represent a shift in

ownership of the leadership process from individual leaders or champions, to the stakeholder group or partnership. At this stage, the original champions or drivers may take a back seat. It is at the development stage that the partnership will need to draw extensively on its stocks of bridging social capital, in order to build and use linking social capital in the form of institutional support for the partnership. This process is clearly illustrated in the development of the VET in schools programs in Cowell, Cooktown and Margaret River, and also in the development of the online access centre in Meander, as a variety of institutional partners including local, State and Commonwealth government and big business, were sought. In Walla Walla, it is illustrated in the building of closer linkages with the national Lutheran church through the youth intern initiative. This supports findings from Kilpatrick and Loechel (forthcoming 2003) that leadership for effective partnerships involves players external to the community, as well as drawing on local leadership sources.

The fourth stage of leadership development identified in Figure 8 is *critical reflection*. The critical reflection stage bears some similarity to the transforming stage of group formation identified by Mulford et al. (1981), and to the process of reflexivity in team learning (Cardno 1999; West 1999; Schippers, Den Hartog & Koopman 2001). It occurs once the partnership has been formalised and the first round of proposed changes has been implemented. The leadership activity at the critical reflection stage is less overt than the more visible relationship and consensus-building activities involved in the initiation and development stages, but evidence from the case studies suggests that this stage of reflection is critical to the partnership development process. In particular, evidence from all case studies suggests that it is at the critical reflection stage that partnerships review the extent and outcomes of bridging and linking social capital, and affirm their identity. It is at this stage that the collective knowledge and identity resources integral to the partnership (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000) are recognised, reviewed and celebrated, leading to an increased commitment to continuous learning, and to partnership sustainability. The Cowell and Cooktown case studies illustrate how publicity surrounding the interim successes of their VET in schools partnerships stimulated a process of critical reflection that reaffirmed the identity and influence of the partnership, in that it 'gave enormous kudos to the people involved and ... they felt good about themselves ... everybody wants to be part of a winning team'. The clear link between critical reflection and sustainability of partnerships evident within the case studies will be discussed in further detail in a later section on 'Effective partnerships, critical reflection and sustainability'.

*Sustainability* is the final stage, during which school and community review and renew their vision and goals and scan for opportunities and new problems in relation to the school–community linkage. As such, it would seem to build directly on the previous critical reflection stage. Once the leadership process has reached the sustainability stage, there are two options: (1) as a result of the leadership process, amendments or modifications to the existing school–community partnership are identified,

and the process goes back to the initiation stage to begin another cycle of building support for the proposed changes; and/or (2) as a result of the leadership process, a new partnership is triggered and a new process begins. Many of the examples in the case studies illustrate amendment to or broadening of the original partnership, such as the further development of the youth intern initiative in Walla Walla which required the development of local government linkages and linkages with other partners in the region. Cooktown and Cowell's VET in schools partnerships, and Meander's online access centre partnerships, are further illustrations of this. For example, Cooktown's VET in schools partnership had given rise to the development of school-based apprenticeships<sup>5</sup>, bringing new institutional partnership stakeholders in the form of representatives from TAFE and from another training company, both located in Cairns. The partnership had to revise its goals and extend its vision, as well as develop new ways of operating, in order to accommodate different procedures, practices and policy guidelines relating to school-based apprenticeships. In addition, new employers had to be recruited to the partnership, who were committed to providing appropriate and ongoing training to school-based apprentices. In Cooktown there is also evidence of partnership sustainability giving rise to new partnerships, such as the proposed community-run skills centre that was in the planning stages at the time of the writer's visit. These examples indicate that both existing levels of bridging and linking social capital, as well as new stocks of social capital, are needed at the sustainability stage of the process.

Figure 8 draws on models of partnership development devised by Shimeld (2001a), Kilpatrick et al. (2002b) and Falk and Smith (2003), which reflect the cyclical nature of the leadership process discussed earlier, in that each new partnership activity tends to follow a similar process. However, subsequent partnerships are likely to proceed more quickly and more smoothly through the various stages than the original partnership. This is because school and community will already have had experience of the partnership process, suggesting that levels of trust between the two will have increased, and that procedures and practices for working in a partnership will be in place—in short, the partnership is able to draw on existing levels of social capital to generate new social capital. This is illustrated in the Cowell, Meander and Margaret River case studies, for example, where school and community have a strong history of working together. Whilst subsequent partnerships are able to draw on knowledge and experience gained from earlier partnerships, each new initiative also provides the opportunity for existing and new group members to experiment with new ways of working together to achieve outcomes.

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<sup>5</sup> Within Australia, students are able to undertake a wage-based part-time apprenticeship with an employer, while at the same time continuing with their school studies and receiving a school completion certificate. School-based apprenticeships are one component of the VET in schools initiative.

However, whilst the process of partnership development is cyclical, the findings indicate that new learning also takes place each time a new cycle begins. This is most clearly illustrated in Cowell's VET in schools partnership which reinvented itself, drawing on knowledge and skills learnt during Shimeld (2001a), Figure 8 explicitly illustrates the partnership development process as one of continuous learning, by representing the sustainability stage as one which spirals upwards<sup>6</sup> to reflect new learning, rather than depicting the process as a closed circle in which no new learning takes place. Figure 8 therefore differs from some other cyclical models of leadership development which have implied the influence of new learning but have not explicitly illustrated it (see, for example, Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997), but is consistent with the models proposed by Shimeld (2001a), Kilpatrick et al. (2002b) and Falk and Smith (2003).

#### *Effective partnerships, critical reflection and sustainability*

It needs to be reiterated that the five-stage model of partnership development (Figure 8) is a theoretical model only and that partnerships may revisit any or all of the stages, including critical reflection, during the process. It is suggested that whilst all stages of the partnership development process are integral to the development of effective partnerships, the critical reflection and sustainability stages are particularly critical if school–community partnerships are to contribute in an ongoing way to rural community development, by continuing to use and build upon the social capital developed through the partnership. Prior to the point at which the critical reflection stage appears in the model (see Figure 8), the partnership has been on an upward spiral characterised by vigorous activity and rapid change, thereby allowing stakeholders little time for reflection. Consistent with the literature on reflexivity in team learning (Cardno 1999; West 1999; Schippers, Den Hartog & Koopman 2001), on the transforming stage of group formation (Mulford et al. 1981; Mulford 2002), and on group reflection as a central component of building shared practice in communities of practice (Wenger 1998; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002), critical reflection would appear to be integral to the development of a partnership culture within school and community. The finding is also supported by leadership research which emphasises critical reflection as a key part of the process of developing a collaborative school culture (see, for example, Gorinski & Davey 2000).

In effect the critical reflection stage could be viewed as the final stage in transferring leadership of the partnership to the stakeholders, at which the vision for the partnership is shared amongst all stakeholders. This supports research (Schippers, Den Hartog & Koopman 2001) that links team reflexivity with the development of a shared vision amongst team members. It is at the critical reflection stage that stakeholders are able to take the time to critically reflect on the collective capacity of the partnership in terms of its successful and less successful outcomes, and to celebrate

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<sup>6</sup> I also wish to acknowledge my colleague, Mr Tony Smith, who first conceived of representing continuous learning throughout the leadership process in terms of an upward spiral.

some interim successes, as well as make changes to less successful processes and practices. In short, critical reflection facilitates affirmation of partnership identity. This indicates, as Wenger (1998) noted, that collaborative learning processes are transformational, in that not only did the partnerships 'support the process of acquiring knowledge [but they] offer[ed] a place where new ways of knowing [could] be realised in the form of ... an identity' (p. 215). This happens because of the trust (both generalised and institutional) that has been built in the preceding stages of partnership development, and confirms findings from Schippers, Den Hartog and Koopman (2001) regarding the positive links between trust and team reflexivity. It also fits well with team and organisational learning theory that highlights the importance of reflection and internalisation processes in increasing individual and group learning capacity (see, for example, Senge et al. 1999; Hackman 2002).

It would seem that the critical reflection stage may be the defining point at which the partnership moves well beyond functional leadership (leadership related to a specific task or goal), to a focus on facilitative leadership (leadership focused on the development and use of social capital). This is illustrated in Cowell's VET in schools partnership. Following a process of critical reflection on its role and efficacy, at a time when student numbers in the VET in schools program were beginning to decline, the first management committee determined to dissolve the original partnership, and to form a new partnership and management committee that would better reflect the interests of the whole community (that is, to better share leadership and encourage ownership of the process amongst a more diverse group of stakeholders). The leadership process began again, with a new and more representative committee being appointed, including oyster growers, fishing industry and school council representatives, and students and school staff, including the school farm manager. By reviewing the extent of bridging and linking social capital within the partnership, a clear need emerged to form new collaborations with a variety of stakeholders from both within and outside the community. This brought with it the challenge of differing cultures and value systems, agendas, timetables and schedules, funding cycles, and ways of doing things, and the partnership needed to work through the initiation and development stages again, albeit in a shorter time frame than the original partnership. The way in which the partnership dealt with and learnt from its mistakes at the critical reflection stage was a key factor in ongoing partnership effectiveness. This supports findings from Cardno (1999) and Schippers, Den Hartog and Koopman (2001) linking reflexivity to team effectiveness. The VET in schools partnership in Cowell has now reached the sustainability stage and is reviewing ways in which the partnership can be further developed, including greater articulation of VET in schools courses with TAFE and other accredited training organisations.

In another example, the VET in schools partnership described in the Cooktown case study indicates that during the maintenance stage (which now incorporates the critical reflection stage as described

earlier in this chapter), a change occurred in the way the partnership viewed itself and its achievements. The growing impact of the partnership in terms of student outcomes encouraged stakeholders to risk take further by appointing a VET coordinator who was not an educator. This person was carefully chosen to further the vision and aims of the partnership through her broad networks both internal and external to the community, and because she was a trusted and respected community member. The critical reflection stage was also important in terms of reviewing and reaffirming the purposes of the partnership and the reasons for its success to date, including a reaffirmation of the importance of careful selection of committee members resulting in their continued commitment to the partnership. These are all strategies for building community identified in the communities-of-practice literature (see, for example, Wenger 1998; Kilpatrick & Vanclay forthcoming).

From at least one study site there are indications that the critical reflection process led to such an affirmation of success and efficacy of the partnership and its outcomes, that the need for further change was not considered necessary. In other words, the partnership did not continue to learn, and the leadership process stalled, being replaced by good management practices. In Margaret River, the VET in schools management committee reflected on its successes in terms of student and community-wide outcomes, determined that the project was operating successfully, and so disbanded, because there was no longer a perceived need for their leadership. The reduction in opportunities for group reflection had implications in terms of the partnership. On a return visit to the site in June 2001, the writer discovered the partnership was under some threat because of a State government review into post-compulsory education that threatened the continued existence of the VET in schools program in its current form, and because of other concerns highlighted by students. This partnership was therefore 'forced' to revisit the critical reflection process in an effort to ensure partnership sustainability.

Essentially the critical reflection stage is one of consolidation. Examples from Cowell, Cooktown and Walla Walla suggest that if the leadership process recognises and allows time for the partnership to seek and reflect on feedback, and to reflect on group achievements and on the group's ability to bring about community-wide change, then partnerships are better placed to move onto the sustainability stage. Given that the findings suggest the future of partnerships appears to be determined by whether they reach the critical reflection stage, and by what happens during that stage, it is interesting that this stage does not feature prominently in much of the partnership development literature reviewed (see, for example, Kearns, Murphy & Villiers 1996; Lane & Dorfman 1997; Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997), nor was it identified in the original (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b) study. This is most likely because critical reflection is not a stage at which innovation or measurable outcomes are readily visible, so its importance as part of the leadership process may be

overlooked. The findings presented in this study therefore represent potentially significant new knowledge in relation to the partnership development process, and highlight an area requiring further research.

Evidence from the case study sites suggests that partnerships do not always have control over the amount of time available for critical reflection. For example, many of the partnerships described relied on external, fixed term funding, with a resulting focus on the initiation and development phases (and demonstration of tangible outcomes), and insufficient time or funding allocated to reflection and sustainability—and, therefore, to continuous learning. This also supports findings from community development research, which highlights a greater focus by funding bodies on output aims as opposed to process aims (Wilkinson 1991; Chrislip & Larson 1994; Lane & Dorfman 1997; Edwards et al. 2000), and would appear to have implications in terms of restrictive funding regimes for a range of partnership funding programs, and particularly for VET in schools funding. It also echoes concerns raised by Young and Mitchell (2003) regarding the effects of ‘management evaluation’ common to government-funded programs, that focuses on efficiency, effectiveness and accountability, and on the measurement of outcomes. As Young and Mitchell note, this style of evaluation may prevent partnerships from optimising the benefits of working in collaboratively.

The indications are that if partnerships do not have adequate time and/or financial resources to move to the sustainability stage, they may be at risk of stalling and eventually disbanding, with the consequent loss of social capital and collective capacity that has been gradually built up. As Edwards et al. (2000) noted, it would seem likely that delivery partnerships (those with a strong focus on output aims) might be most at risk here, and this has implications for partnership funding. This concern was emphasised by those involved in the VET in schools partnership in Cooktown, during a public meeting in June 2001 to present preliminary findings from the research, which was facilitated by the writer.

## **Summary**

The development of school–community partnerships represents the building of social capital, gradually moving from individualist concerns in the early stages, to collectivist concerns and group efficacy and identity in the later stages. The development of shared values and vision in relation to the future of the community’s youth is the driver for partnership development. Successive partnership stages encourage the development of bridging and linking social capital, as schools encourage people to work with others within and beyond the community with whom they might not previously have been involved. Bridging and linking social capital are important facets of social capital, building on the bonding social capital that has already been developed within schools, other organisations and groups within the community. Critical reflection is potentially one of the most



important stages of partnership development, although has not been adequately researched in much of the partnership development literature to date. This may be the defining point at which the partnership moves well beyond functional leadership to a focus on facilitative leadership. Examples from this study indicate that critical reflection triggers the move to the sustainability stage of the partnership. If partnerships are to be a vehicle for rural community development, it is essential that they move beyond development to the critical reflection and sustainability stages.

## **What leadership roles are necessary for the development of school–community partnerships, and what leadership characteristics and attributes are associated with each of these roles?**

The discussion in the preceding section illustrates clearly that leadership for effective school–community partnerships in each of the study sites is a process that gradually transfers leadership from the hands of a small number of individuals at the trigger and initiation stages, to a wider group, representative of both internal and external stakeholder interests, at the development, critical reflection and sustainability stages. That is, the vision of individuals at the trigger stage gradually develops into a shared group (school and community) vision, over which the group has ownership and therefore a vested interest in ensuring its sustainability. This leadership process focuses on empowering or ‘enabling’ others to undertake a leadership role, by ‘connecting them to one another, to information and to their community’ (Falk & Smith 2003, pp. 17–18), and is consistent with the process of enabling leadership highlighted by Falk and Smith (2003). This section focuses on the way in which individuals are empowered or enabled to participate in leadership of the partnership—that is, on the leadership roles necessary for building social capital. The following sub sections identify different leadership roles at different stages of the partnership development process, discuss how leadership roles are shared between school and community, and then focus on the overarching social capital building attributes, characteristics and roles of boundary crossers and principals, two of the key groups of players in the development of school–community partnerships.

### **Leadership roles and stages of the partnership development process**

Findings from the case studies, and from the summary of leadership processes for five partnerships presented in Table 10 earlier in this chapter, indicate there are eight leadership roles in the partnership development process. These roles are presented in Table 11. They are consistent with, but build upon, research by Henton, Melville and Walesh (1997) on leadership roles in community development, and also link with later work by Bass (2000). Table 11 is derived from the findings of the current study, and did not appear in the original final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (Kilpatrick et al. 2002b). It lists the leadership roles, links them with the

**Table 11: School–community partnerships: Leadership process, roles and sources**

Stage of process	Leadership roles	Leadership sources
Trigger	<b>Entrepreneur</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>look at school and community needs from different perspectives</li> <li>identify tentative solution or opportunity</li> </ul>	<b>School sources:</b> teacher, coordinator of VET program, students <b>Community sources:</b> school council member, local business/industry leaders, coordinator of business enterprise centre, youth, government reps
Initiation	<b>Networker</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>connect with opinion leaders critical to change process</li> <li>build community support for change</li> <li>identify external support for change</li> </ul>	<b>School sources:</b> principal, deputy principal, teacher, coordinator of VET program, pastor, students <b>Community sources:</b> school council/board of management member, local business/industry leaders, coordinator of business enterprise centre, youth, government reps
	<b>Teacher</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide information about proposed change</li> <li>facilitate stakeholders to develop a common purpose and vision</li> <li>develop skills and confidence for individuals to assume leadership role</li> <li>facilitate partnership learning through shared and ongoing school–community learning experiences</li> <li>provide training in conflict resolution</li> </ul>	<b>School sources:</b> principal, VET coordinator, pastor  <b>Community sources:</b> school council/board of management rep, coordinator of business enterprise centre
	<b>Supporter</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>act as a sounding board</li> <li>provide material and emotional support to stakeholders</li> <li>'legitimise' the partnership</li> <li>support risk taking</li> </ul>	<b>School sources:</b> principal <b>Community sources:</b> school council/board of management rep, coordinator of business enterprise centre, government reps
Development	<b>Coordinator</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop shared decisionmaking structures and practices</li> <li>recruit management committee members</li> <li>locate and access resources</li> <li>help group set and progress towards meeting goals</li> </ul>	<b>School sources:</b> teacher, coordinator of VET program, pastor, students  <b>Community sources:</b> local business/industry leaders, school council/board of management rep, youth
	<b>Motivator</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>build trust and commitment between partnership members</li> <li>facilitate communication between partnership members</li> <li>communicate/reinforce shared vision</li> </ul>	<b>School sources:</b> principal, coordinator of VET program, pastor <b>Community sources:</b> school council/board of management rep, partnership management committee chair
Critical Reflection	<b>Mentor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>encourage group to monitor, reflect on, and learn from their collective achievements/failures</li> <li>ensure interim successes are identified and celebrated</li> </ul>	<b>School sources:</b> principal, coordinator of VET program, pastor <b>Community sources:</b> school council/board of management rep, partnership management committee chair
Sustainability	<b>Sustainer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continually scan horizon for new threats/opportunities; encourage others to do the same</li> <li>encourage regular review and renewal of partnership goals</li> <li>develop and nurture other opportunities for continued collective action within the community</li> </ul>	<b>School sources:</b> principal, coordinator of VET program, pastor  <b>Community sources:</b> school council/board of management rep, partnership management committee representatives and chair, school–industry liaison officer

stages of partnership development (presented in Figure 8), and summarises school and community leadership sources for each of these roles. Again it must be noted that 'parents' are not identified as a separate category, because they were involved in specific capacities in most of the partnerships examined, namely as school council members, local business/industry leaders, and partnership management committee representatives. Table 11 represents new knowledge in relation to the partnership development process because it revises, expands and develops the leadership roles identified by Henton, Melville and Walesh (1997) and Bass (2000), and identifies the existence of a specific leadership role (that of mentor) at the critical reflection stage. It also provides a breakdown of school and community leadership sources for each role, which has not been provided in such detail elsewhere in the literature.

Each of the leadership roles assume importance at different stages of the partnership development process, and is undertaken by a variety of individuals from within the school and community. The link between specific individuals and their leadership roles, in relation to the partnerships featured in the five case studies, will be discussed in more detail in the next section titled 'Sharing leadership roles between school and community: Characteristics and attributes of leaders in the partnership development process'. Although Table 11 is a useful tool for identifying and analysing the various leadership roles that contribute to effective partnerships, in reality, identification of discrete leadership roles, and their link to stages of the leadership process, is not always so clear cut. There is considerable overlap between a number of the roles, with the same person undertaking a number of these roles, sometimes simultaneously. In addition, the networker role spans the whole process, although is particularly crucial in the initiation stage, while entrepreneurs are needed at the trigger and again at the sustainability stage.

Table 11 indicates that leadership roles can be loosely grouped into two categories: those that facilitate working relationships between stakeholders, and those that achieve (deliver) partnership goals. This aligns closely with research by Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) that identifies knowledge and identity resources as the building blocks of social capital, in that facilitative leadership roles can be seen to build on and develop individual and group identity resources, while delivery leadership roles build on and develop knowledge resources. The findings are also consistent with other partnership development research that identifies both a facilitative and delivery focus of effective partnerships (see, for example, the process and task-oriented focus described by Lane & Dorfman 1997, and the facilitative and delivery focus described by Edwards et al. 2000). In addition, there are similarities with the literature on group formation (see Latemore & Crawford 1988), in terms of the need for a balance between the social focus and output focus of leadership roles, and between broad or 'big picture' thinkers, and the more concrete but complex role of coordinating the change.

Referring to Table 11, there are four discrete but inter-related facilitative leadership roles—teacher, supporter, motivator and mentor; and two discrete delivery roles—networker and coordinator. The role of sustainer is interesting in that it has both a facilitative and delivery focus. The eighth role—that of entrepreneur—does not appear to have either a facilitative or delivery focus; that is, it does not appear to directly contribute to the actual process of building social capital, but is the stimulus or trigger to social capital building. Each of these roles will be discussed in more detail in the following section. Table 11 indicates a greater focus on facilitative rather than delivery roles, and this emphasis aligns with community development research (see, for example, Wilkinson 1991; Hill & Moore 2002) that links effective community development with partnerships that have a strong facilitative orientation. This may also help to explain the reasons for the effectiveness and sustainability of most of the partnerships featured in this study.

The broad division of leadership roles into facilitative or delivery is associated with particular tasks or functions, which require specific leadership skills and expertise. For example, leaders undertaking facilitative roles perform functions related to building identity resources (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000), including building individual self confidence, relationship and trust building, and development and communication of a shared vision, and need to have strong skills in these areas. Table 11 indicates there is a stronger focus on facilitative roles and functions during the earlier stage of the process (initiation stages) as individuals develop their skills and confidence and learn to work together. The teacher and supporter roles therefore assume importance at that stage. As the partnership development process continues, the individual focus shifts to a group facilitative focus: namely, the motivator role at the development stage, the mentor role at the critical reflection stage, and the sustainer role at the sustainability stage, during which the group seeks further opportunities for collective action within the community.

On the other hand, leaders undertaking delivery roles perform functions focused on developing knowledge resources (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000), including identifying internal and external resources available to the partnership and developing processes for partnership operation. They need to have strong organisational and negotiation skills, and broad networks (or access to broad networks) within and outside the community. The delivery focus assumes importance during the development stage of the partnership, represented by the coordinator role, as procedures are put in place to allow the partnership to meet its objectives. Not surprisingly, the development stage is usually characterised by the entry of new leaders, with different skills and expertise than leaders in the earlier stages of partnership development. Those with a delivery orientation also assume importance at the sustainability stage, as the existing partnership focuses on new and better ways of delivering outcomes. As noted earlier, the role of sustainer at this stage is interesting, in that it appears to have both a delivery and a facilitative focus.

In some cases within the study sites, leaders displayed a clear process or task orientation, supporting findings by Henton, Melville and Walesh (1997), that one leader alone is unlikely to have sufficient skills in both areas. For example, the oyster grower in Cowell, who acted as entrepreneur and networker, inclined more towards a delivery focus, utilising her extensive networks to access support and resources for the VET in schools partnership. However, in most partnerships the same leaders were required to undertake several leadership roles, including those with both a facilitative and a delivery orientation. For example, in Cooktown, the VET coordinator played a role in the further expansion of the existing partnership to include school-based apprenticeships (delivery role), while at the same time searching for new ways of utilising within the wider community the momentum created by the partnership (facilitative role). In Walla Walla, the pastor undertook both a facilitative role (mentoring youth interns) and a delivery role (identifying, accessing and coordinating internal and external resources for the partnership; building structures and processes for communication amongst parties to deliver the youth intern partnership). This blurring of leadership role orientation is most likely explained by the relatively small size of the rural communities studied and the limited number of leaders available. It also suggests that some individuals are both willing and able to use their networks to undertake both types of leadership roles. The blurring of leadership role orientation can be seen as a positive feature of school–community partnerships in small rural communities, in terms of facilitating communication and contributing to partnership cohesiveness.

The specific breakdown of leadership roles in terms of their social capital building focus, and the linking of individuals to these roles, is new to this study, and contributes to our understanding of the complexity of leadership for school–community partnerships. This has implications for schools and communities who need to ensure the correct balance between facilitative (identity) and delivery (knowledge) roles.

### **Sharing leadership roles between school and community: Characteristics and attributes of leaders in the partnership development process**

In the following sections, the eight leadership roles identified in Table 11 will be examined with reference to the five case studies. Specifically, the sections will examine the characteristics and attributes of those involved in the various leadership roles. They will show that although school principals are integral to the development and sustainability of effective school–community partnerships, many of those involved in leadership roles for partnership development are not in formal leadership positions, but are valued by the partnership for their particular skills, experience and knowledge. This supports findings by the British NHS (2000) that effective integrated health care teams value partners because of their competencies and skills rather than because of the formal, traditional leadership roles they hold. It also supports the argument for viewing leadership as a process (Barker 1997) in which leadership roles are not clearly defined, but must be developed as the partnership progresses. In addition, the findings support community development research indicating

that leaders come from all sections of the community, including public, private and non profit sectors (see, for example, Raftery 1993; Henton, Melville & Walesh 1997). The leadership role of entrepreneur is a good example of this.

### *Entrepreneur*

Most of the partnerships examined indicated that the role of *entrepreneur* at the trigger stage tends to be occupied by someone other than the school principal—most likely by another school staff member, a school council representative, or a local business/industry leader. For example, the youth intern scheme at Walla Walla was identified by the pastor who was accepted in the school, church and local communities; school staff members triggered the VET in schools partnerships in Cooktown and Margaret River, as well as the community arts partnership in Cowell and the recycling partnership in Margaret River; while a local oyster grower who was a parent and member of the school council identified the opportunity for the Cowell VET in schools project. This supports Jackson et al's findings (1994) that facilitators external to the school are also key players in school–community partnership development, particularly at the entrepreneurial stage, by bringing new links into the school. In a small number of instances, students acted as entrepreneurs, such as the two students who planned the debutante ball in Walla Walla. This is not to suggest that principals never identified problems or opportunities. However, the findings indicated that the transformational leadership practices of the five principals empowered others within the school and community to take initiatives and accept leadership responsibilities, including entrepreneurial roles. This is certainly consistent with research into the individual capacity building and organisational learning outcomes linked to transformational leadership practices (see, for example, Leithwood 1994; Bass 2000; Silins & Mulford 2002).

As noted earlier, apart from the entrepreneurial role that triggers social capital development, the remaining seven leadership roles identified in Table 11 fall within two broad areas, according to their facilitative or delivery focus. Facilitative leadership roles include teacher, supporter, motivator and mentor, and will be discussed first.

### *Teacher*

Given their particular skills, it is not surprising to find that in nearly all partnerships examined, principals were key players in the teacher role, nurturing and developing individual leadership skills and collective commitment to the partnership through their transformational leadership practices (Leithwood, Begley & Cousins 1994; Gorinski & Davey 2000). There are also specific examples of the principals in Cooktown and Meander using their conflict resolution skills to facilitate communication between partners. Underlying the teacher role that principals assumed in partnership development, was their strong belief that the school should learn from, as well as provide learning

opportunities for, all within the community. There are numerous examples of the school as a facilitator of community learning, such as the joint student and industry learning opportunities provided by the VET in schools programs in Cowell and Walla Walla, and the Meander online access centre which is a learning centre for the whole community. In terms of community development, the learning opportunities afforded as schools and communities work together to develop partnerships, for example, to establish VET management committees or to develop the youth intern initiative in Walla Walla, are significant. There seems no doubt that the principals in the five communities saw their role as one of helping to build learning communities, in which the boundaries between school and community are blurred and gradually removed altogether. This is consistent with other research into the changing role of schools and principals in the knowledge economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in which principals are leading learners (New South Wales Department of School Education 1995; Beare 2001, 2002).

While principals tended to be dominant players in the teacher leadership role, others also undertook teacher roles, such as the VET coordinator and business enterprise centre coordinator in Margaret River, both of whom worked hard to provide information to stakeholders about the proposed VET partnership, and to build their confidence to participate. In another example, the school council member in Meander played a key teacher role in developing the skills and confidence of individuals to participate in the online access centre partnership and to develop a shared vision for the centre.

### *Supporter*

The key role of each principal in the study was as a supporter of the school–community collaboration, and it seems unlikely that the partnerships described in these case studies would have developed or enjoyed the same level of success without this support. This finding is consistent with other school–community partnership research reflecting the legitimising role of the school principal (see, for example, Cumming 1992; Jackson et al. 1994; Street 1997). The support of the principal was grounded in their formal power to make decisions about and allocate resources to school–community partnerships, but was also closely linked to their leadership role as teacher, that focused on building the commitment and capacity of others to achieve collective goals. All the leaders who identified opportunities or problems approached the principal before anyone else, with the exception of the school councillor/relief teacher who identified the Meander online access centre opportunity when the principal was away on long service leave. Legitimation of school–community partnerships by the principal was a necessary early step in the leadership process. Even in the case of Meander's online access centre the support of the principal was sought before the proposal reached the development stage.

In most schools, a supporter or legitimising role was also undertaken by the chair or representative of the school council (in Cowell, Margaret River and Meander) or school board of management (in Walla Walla), as well as by key business/industry stakeholders involved in the partnership (such as aquaculture stakeholders in Cowell and the mining industry stakeholder in Cooktown).

#### *Motivator*

The motivator role is vital in building trust between the partners and ensuring ongoing commitment to the partnership. Findings indicate this role was usually undertaken by the chair or other members of the partnership management committee, with some assistance from others. For example, in Cooktown the chair of the VET in schools partnership committee was prominent in the motivator role, networking extensively with stakeholders on a personal basis, to establish trust and build commitment to the partnership. The motivator role in Margaret River's VET in schools partnership was shared between the VET coordinator, the chairperson of the partnership committee, and a school council representative (who was also the P & C chairperson and a prominent local business person). The principal in Cowell continued to play a key motivator role in relation to the VET in schools partnership, but principals in all other schools tended to have lower levels of involvement in this leadership role. This is most likely because, by the development stage of the partnership, leadership had been transferred to the partnership, hence responsibility for motivating the group had become a collective partnership responsibility.

It seems logical that similar people would undertake both motivator and mentor leadership roles, given the degree of overlap between the two in terms of group facilitation skills, as discussed in the following section on the mentor role.

#### *Mentor*

The role of mentor at the critical reflection stage tended to be shared between the VET in schools partnership coordinator, the chair of the partnership management committee, and the principal in Cooktown and Margaret River, while in Cowell the principal played a key mentoring role. In Meander, the role of mentor was undertaken by the online access centre coordinator, and in Walla Walla by the school pastor.

The skills of principals and others who act in the mentor role, in terms of group facilitation, critical reflection, and conflict resolution and negotiation, are vital in allowing the partnership to learn and grow from their differences and mistakes. That is, mentors facilitate the process of continuous learning within the partnership. This is exemplified in the mentor role of the school principal in Cowell, as she facilitated partners in the VET in schools partnership to review their structure, processes, and goals, resulting in the formation of a new partnership. These strategies accord with



those for facilitating reflexivity in work teams, which ultimately lead to greater team effectiveness (Cardno 1999; Hackman 2002). Effectively, the mentor role focuses on building shared practice within the partnership. Again, referring to the Cowell VET in schools partnership, the principal and chair of the VET partnership management committee, in the shared role of mentor, undertook a number of activities designed to facilitate shared practice. These included identifying a comparable community model to draw ideas from (that is, the Cleve Area School VET in schools partnership), and using experts from educational and aquaculture industry sectors to influence the development of knowledge by the partnership. These are similar to the strategies identified by Wenger (1998; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002) for building shared practice within communities of practice.

In addition to the facilitative skills already identified, the mentors identified in this study shared several attributes, including optimism and enthusiasm for the partnership, recognition of the importance to partnership morale of publicising and celebrating interim successes, and a desire to empower individuals through their participation in the partnership. For example, in Cooktown the VET in schools coordinator, working with the principal, ensured that external publicity for the *Step Ahead* partnership focused on the continued high levels of commitment of stakeholders as key contributors to partnership effectiveness, which strengthened partnership identity and efficacy, and empowered stakeholders to seek further leadership roles within their community. The VET in schools coordinator in Margaret River facilitated similar awareness raising opportunities within his community. In Cowell, the VET coordinator, working with the principal, saw opportunities for publicising the success of the VET aquaculture program widely, utilising this publicity to garner continued commitment to a process of continuous learning within the partnership, as well as to foster further commitment to change within the broader community, including drawing on external funding sources that had hitherto been under-utilised by some community groups.

The second broad group of leadership roles, those focused on delivery, include the networker and coordinator roles, and these will be discussed next. It is these roles that draw on and build the knowledge resources of the partnership; that is, knowledge of who, when and where to go for advice or resources and knowledge of how to get things done.

### *Networker*

The networker role is integral to the building of social capital, and hence, to the development of school–community partnerships. It links closely with the knowledge resources that individuals bring to interactions, identified by Falk and Kilpatrick (2000). In each site those who undertook networker roles accessed their networks within the communities to encourage others to become involved and build support for the initiative, and used their external networks, often with State systems, to access information and resources and identify any formal procedures that had to be followed. By accessing

a variety of networks, networkers were both building and using bridging and linking social capital (Woolcock 1999; Stone & Hughes 2001, 2002).

Findings indicate that it was often the principal in the first instance (in Margaret River, Cowell and Cooktown) who undertook a networker role, by explicitly using their existing diverse networks to identify people who could contribute to the partnership. This role of principals is discussed in more detail in a later section titled 'The keyholder role of the principal in partnership development'. In most communities there were several networkers, including the principal, with at least one from the established residents' group, often a business/industry representative. This supports findings from Jackson et al. (1994) regarding the importance to school-community partnerships of external facilitators who often act in the networker role. Because they are not bound by the history of the school, they can encourage individuals to take on new roles that they may not have considered previously. However, networkers could also be newer arrivals, as is the case in Margaret River where the principal, VET coordinator and business enterprise centre coordinator were all relatively new arrivals. However, they quickly established networks through their professional and voluntary associations (for example, the principal utilised church and service club networks, which gave him legitimacy and engendered trust within the community). In a small number of cases, students acted as networkers. For example, two students initiated and built support for the debutante ball in Walla Walla, and youth (including school students) in Margaret River's youth advisory council built support for, and were ultimately successful in gaining, a youth skate park. The critical role of those who utilised their networks for the benefit of school and community is further discussed in a later section titled 'The role of boundary crossers'.

### *Coordinator*

Coordinators are crucial players in the development of partnerships. Their organisational (project management) and negotiation skills are needed to develop shared decisionmaking structures and processes, to locate and access resources, and to help the group set and meet goals. Coordinators may also be networkers, or work closely with networkers, who facilitate access to the increased levels of formal support in terms of the financial and/or human resources required to develop the project. For most of the partnerships identified in this study, a specific program coordinator was appointed to undertake this role (VET coordinators in Margaret River and Cooktown; the online access centre coordinator in Meander, and the pastor in Walla Walla). Interestingly, the VET coordinator for Cowell's aquaculture partnership was not appointed until later in the process, meaning that much of the coordination was undertaken by the principal and aquaculture management committee members, although in other sites, school principals were unlikely to take the role of coordinator.

Indications from the case studies confirm the complex and heavy workload of coordinators reported in the literature (see Frost 2000, who reported on the relatively high rate of burnout amongst VET coordinators). They were keenly aware of their responsibilities and of the pressures of their roles, and referred to the need to put in many extra hours of work in order to meet these responsibilities. For school VET coordinators in Walla Walla, Margaret River, Cowell and Cooktown, and for agriculture and equine studies teachers in Walla Walla, this could mean weekend and holiday commitments, and working days well in excess of the traditional school day. For the school staff member who coordinated the volunteer reading scheme in Margaret River, this meant dealing with the added pressures of accessing resources—volunteer tutors, sufficient space within the school to accommodate them, and sufficient resources within the school budget—given that the partnership did not receive any external funding.

The final leadership role, that of sustainer, is interesting in that it appears to have both a facilitative and delivery focus, as discussed below.

### *Sustainer*

As leadership processes enter the sustainability stage, a new leadership role is required, in order to drive the partnership forward and explore new challenges. The role of sustainer is to agitate for continued change, and to develop and nurture other opportunities for continued collective action within the community. Sustainers are likely to work closely with entrepreneurs in identifying new opportunities, and with networkers in using existing social capital and building new social capital. Findings from the case studies show that sustainers tended to be drawn from a combination of school and/or community sources. For example, in Cowell, Meander and Walla Walla part of the role (agitation for further change) was undertaken by partnership committee members such as the chairperson in the first two sites, and the school pastor in Walla Walla, while in Cooktown the role was undertaken by both the VET coordinator and members of the partnership committee. The other part of the role (to develop and nurture other opportunities for collective action) was undertaken by the school principal in Cowell, Margaret River and Meander, or by other partnership members, such as the pastor in Walla Walla. Even though principals did not feature prominently at the sustainability stage because leadership of the school–community linkage and responsibility for its future had by that stage transferred to the group, this does not mean that principals had no further role in the partnership development process. In the later stages of the partnership they continued to legitimise the school–community linkage through tacit support and allocation of resources, usually through time release of teachers or provision of funds.

## **Leadership roles for students/youth**

In the five case studies presented, there is some evidence of students and youth occupying leadership roles in partnership development. However, the extent of their involvement was not as great as might have been expected, given that research links sustainable community development with youth participation in leadership (McSwan & Barman-Jenssen 1999; Kenyon & Black 2001).

It is significant that although students were one of the key beneficiary groups of most of the school–community partnerships reported in the five case studies, they were only occasionally involved as leaders in the process of developing those partnerships. Where students undertook leadership roles, those roles were task orientated as might be expected, and specifically included those of entrepreneur, networker and coordinator. For example, the same students in Walla Walla occupied all three roles in relation to the debutante ball, although it is interesting that the staff interviewed did not offer this as an example of student leadership. The findings suggest that where students undertook leadership roles in school–community partnerships, this was supported by school governance structures that provided for student participation in decisionmaking, such as a strong student representative council (SRC), or student representation elsewhere within the school, such as in Cowell where students were members of the school council.

Apart from in Cowell and Walla Walla, students did not appear to be represented on partnership management committees and there was little evidence of their involvement in planning and decisionmaking for the partnership. This echoes findings from Jackson et al. (1994) calling for greater involvement of students in planning and evaluation of school–community partnerships. These findings appear to be at odds with the broader, relatively inclusive community development practices evident in most of the sites. For example, in Margaret River, youth had a strong voice through the youth advisory council, but students appeared to be absent from planning and decisionmaking in relation to the VET in schools, and state emergency services (SES) cadet partnerships, both of which represented significant school–community collaborations. This suggests that there are opportunities for student participation in the leadership of school–community partnerships in these communities, that need to be further explored. Participation of students/youth in partnership development is vital in developing future community leaders.

## **The role of boundary crossers**

A key group of players who featured prominently in the leadership process, may be collectively described as boundary crossers (Johns et al. 2000b & c; 2001; Kilpatrick, Falk & Johns 2002)<sup>7</sup>. These people either occupied a school position that required ongoing liaison with the wider

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<sup>7</sup> The term 'boundary crossers' was influenced by Peirce, N. & Johnson, C. 1997, *Boundary Crossers: Community leadership for a global age*, The Academy of Leadership Press, Maryland, USA.

community, such as a school VET coordinator, or were formal or informal community leaders, such as opinion leaders or respected business people. These school and community champions shared several characteristics: they were well-known, respected and sometimes long-term community members; they tended to have a broad vision for their community about which they were passionate; and they were able to speak the language of both school and community 'cultures', therefore providing a key link between school and community. These people played a key role in brokering the partnership, a role that James and St. Leger (2003) identified as central to partnership success and sustainability. Boundary crossers tended to occupy the networker role in the partnership development process, indicating involvement through most stages of the partnership development process, but also undertook roles as entrepreneurs, teachers, coordinators and sustainers; that is, they undertook both facilitative and delivery roles as required. Examples from the VET in schools partnership in Margaret River, the online access centre partnership in Meander, and the youth intern partnership Walla Walla, indicated that when a boundary crosser is a trigger stage leader, they tend to maintain a leadership role throughout the leadership process.

Boundary crossers, like the principal, brought high levels of knowledge and identity resources (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000) to the partnership. The focus of their knowledge resources—specifically in relation to accessing a variety of internal and external support networks to facilitate collective action—is complementary to the more specific education and training-related networks of school principals. For example, in Meander the online access centre bid was prepared by a boundary crosser who was also a trained librarian<sup>8</sup> and member of the school council. St Paul's pastor had contacts with the national Lutheran church's youth intern program, and the oyster grower at Cowell had State industry and education contacts. In Margaret River, the facilitator of the business enterprise centre used her external networks to access funding to initiate enterprise education, and worked with the VET coordinator to facilitate the VET in schools partnership, while the VET coordinator in Cooktown was a valued boundary crosser because she 'knows how to work through the bureaucracy of government and government departments ... she has a very broad network'. The important role of boundary crossers has implications for the development of school–community partnerships, in that school principals in particular, need to identify and nurture relationships with boundary crossers early in the partnership.

### **The keyholder role of the principal in partnership development**

The case studies indicate that there appears to be a core body of individuals involved in most stages of partnership development, and that the central figure is the school principal. The school principal's role is multi-faceted, in that s/he is involved in social capital building both within the school

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<sup>8</sup> Online access centres are coordinated by the State Library in Tasmania.

(bonding social capital) and between the school and community (bridging and linking social capital), through the formation of school–community partnerships. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the findings clearly indicate that each of the schools studied has relatively strong levels of bonding social capital, evidenced by the extent of their organisational learning and their distributive leadership practices. This supports Figure 8 presented earlier in this chapter, that illustrates how effective school–community partnerships began from a base of bonding social capital within the school. The building of bonding social capital is a clear principal responsibility, supporting research by Jackson et al. (1994) that found principals play a vital role in developing collaborative norms within the school, which are the foundation of effective partnerships.

There are also a number of examples of the principal being prepared to risk take where necessary, in order to champion worthwhile initiatives that were ‘outside the box’ and frequently outside the typical activities of schools. In turn, principals empowered others to risk take and think outside the box. For example, Cooktown’s VET in schools partnership is a policy opportunity that did not at first glance fit the community’s visions, but thinking outside the box allowed partners to adapt the program to realise their vision.

Previous research in schools and elsewhere identifies that risk taking and seeking new opportunities are likely to happen when there is a trusting and collaborative climate and a shared vision for the future. Such research establishes a positive correlation between organisational learning and a transformational leadership style (for example, Bass 2000; Silins & Mulford 2002). There is evidence from each of the five sites that the principal’s transformational leadership practices played a central role in identifying, fostering and harnessing the skills of staff, and in transforming individual interests into shared purposes (Leithwood, Jantzi & Fernandez 1994; Pigg 1996; Gorinski & Davey 2000). The confidence of the two teachers in Cooktown to initiate the relatively ambitious VET in schools partnership in response to school and community concerns, is a good example of this. Other examples include the role of the teacher who coordinates the SES cadet program in Margaret River having the confidence and skills to facilitate a partnership with emergency services groups in the region. These examples would seem to support Hallinger and Heck’s (1996) findings that transformational leadership fosters the commitment and capacity of individuals to support change.

There is evidence to indicate that just as principals utilised transformational leadership practices to develop self confidence, leadership skills, and commitment to a shared vision amongst staff within the school, they also played an important role in building the capacity of community members and their commitment to the partnership. For example, in Cowell, by building the self confidence of community members, particularly those from marginalised groups such as the unemployed, the principal provided opportunities for their skills and talents to be recognised and utilised. The

principal at Cooktown deliberately used local networks to involve and then upskill Indigenous, business/industry, and other community members to take on leadership roles in the VET in schools partnership. As a result of their involvement in this partnership, and the confidence and networks built, several members subsequently became involved in the planning and development of new community initiatives, including the proposed community skills centre.

In Meander and Margaret River, new settlers had brought expertise and a willingness to take control of their own future into the community, and school principals in both cases harnessed the skills of these people in the development of school–community partnerships. These findings regarding partnership activity in Meander and Margaret River are also consistent with community development research (see, for example, Edwards et al. 2000), which found that communities to which people had moved for lifestyle reasons tended to generate more partnership activity than communities to which people had moved for a quiet life. Margaret River also has a relatively high socioeconomic status compared with the other study sites, and this has also been identified by Edwards et al. (2000) as a factor likely to stimulate partnership activity.

In some cases, the process of building bridging and linking social capital had to be developed by principals and others from the beginning. For example, in Cooktown's VET in schools partnership, a shared vision had to be developed amongst a diverse group of community and institutional stakeholders, including State and Commonwealth government departments and agencies responsible for education and training. In this case, the knowledge and identity resources of the principal (and of other key players) were drawn on extensively in the development of the partnership. In other cases, the principal's vision was already shared by the community, so others were empowered to utilise their knowledge and identity resources to bring about change. For example, in Meander, the school councillor/relief teacher was confident enough of the alignment between the online centre concept and the principal's vision to invest a considerable amount of time and energy in drafting a proposal before the principal returned from long service leave.

The findings from this study provide evidence to suggest that school principals are in the unique position of being a keyholder who can unlock access to bridging and linking social capital in rural communities, through the development of school–community partnerships. This is due to several reasons, including the key role of the school principal in legitimising the partnership as discussed earlier. It is also due in large part to the vast array of both facilitative and delivery skills, and the extensive knowledge and identity resources, that school principals bring to rural communities, as well as their ability and willingness to utilise these resources not only for the benefit of their students, but for the benefit of the wider community. The keyholder role of school principals has implications for rural community development, in terms of the need for better integration between principals' professional development, and rural community leadership, programs.

## **Summary**

For partnerships to be both effective and sustainable, there needs to be a balance between facilitative and delivery leadership roles. School principals play a key role in partnership development, particularly in the roles of teacher, supporter, and mentor. Their central role in unlocking community access to a range of bridging and linking ties cannot be overlooked. However, many of the people who occupy leadership roles in partnership development are not formally designated leaders, yet they undertake important leadership roles. Some come from within the school, such as teachers, VET coordinators, the school pastor and, to a lesser extent, students. Others come from elsewhere within the community, such as parent representatives on the school council or parent association, local business/industry leaders, and representatives from local government. Each of these people nominate to undertake leadership roles, or are invited to do so, because of their commitment to the partnership. Most bring with them a variety of skills and experience, as well as networks within and outside the community, all of which are vital to the development and sustainability of the partnership. These people are all valued by the partnership because of their skills, experience and commitment.

## **What other factors influence school–community partnerships and what are the impacts of this influence?**

The case studies indicate that the extent to which each of the schools was able to contribute to community capacity outcomes appears to be closely linked to the leadership process through which partnerships were developed and sustained. This leadership process influenced and was influenced by a variety of factors both internal and external to the school and community. These factors will be discussed in more detail in this section. The case studies also confirm findings by Purdue et al. (2000) and Falk and Smith (2003) that partnership development is influenced by individual attributes and characteristics of leaders, as discussed in the previous section.

There is evidence that the relatively small size of the schools and communities studied had a positive influence on the extent to which schools were able to build trust amongst stakeholders, an important early stage in building social capital. This confirms research by Combs and Bailey (1992) and Jolly and Deloney (1996) that school and community size, and proximity of the school to the community, have a significant effect on the extent to which schools are able to foster the development of community social capital. However, as illustrated in Meander, size is a double-edged sword. While the small size of the school allowed relative informality of governance structures and processes that facilitated the building of social capital, it also meant a correspondingly small number of people to undertake leadership roles, with implications for leadership succession and partnership sustainability, as discussed earlier in this chapter.



The remainder of this section will focus on the impact of, and interrelationship between, internal and external factors, in terms of partnership development across the five study sites.

## **Internal factors**

Internal factors that influenced the development and sustainability of school–community partnerships included the internal organisational roles, responsibilities and culture of the school and other stakeholder organisations, and the extent to which partnership practices were embedded within the culture of the school and community. Closely linked to this is the level of maturity of the school–community partnership; community orientation in terms of an inward or outward-looking focus, and the role of school public relations in building social capital. Each of these factors will be considered in more detail below.

### *Organisational roles, responsibilities and culture, and the partnership culture of school and community*

Findings from all five study sites clearly indicate levels of distributive leadership within the schools and appropriate structures and processes to facilitate shared decisionmaking. For example, the three schools that have well developed community partnerships, namely Cowell, Margaret River and Meander, demonstrated extensive community participation in school governance through school councils or equivalent bodies. Evidence from these three case studies suggests that school councils epitomise the shared vision of school and community and, to a certain extent, act as a catalyst for other linkages. In each case, the existing vision and practices of the schools in terms of their relationship with their communities were supported and facilitated by the introduction of school council policy. For example, school governance at Meander Primary School was very much a community affair, albeit on an informal basis, for several years before policy was introduced requiring formal community participation in school governance through school councils. In this case, introduction of the school council policy did not initiate school–community linkages or markedly change existing practices, but implementation of the policy formalised the process.

Collaborative leadership was facilitated by shared values within the school, and between school and community, regarding the importance of school–community collaboration. Formal school leaders and school staff in each of the communities had a broad knowledge of the wide range of community resources available, and used and valued those resources. This indicates a school culture that promotes a collective approach to education, involving the whole community, and supports the findings of Jackson et al. (1994) and others regarding the need for collaboration to be embedded within school culture. This is illustrated by St Paul's in Walla Walla, whose ethos of 'the sharing, caring community' heavily influenced its outward focus and social capital building role. In addition, community members were motivated to make commitments to school–community partnerships, because their contributions were valued. A good example of this is the commitment made by retired

citizens in Margaret River to the volunteer reading program. This suggests that collaboration was embedded not only in school culture, but also in community culture.

However, sometimes newcomers were at odds with school values and culture, which proved a setback to partnerships. For example, in Cowell the developmental phase of the VET in schools partnership was characterised by some staff who 'were looking at developing their resumes' rather than at developing a collaborative community-based educational program. These staff have since left and have been replaced by staff whose values and attitudes match those of the school and community. The implication for school principals is that, prior to and during the early stages of, partnership development, close attention needs to be paid to developing shared values and a common vision, to buffer the partnership against negative influences and to allow it to continue to grow beyond the development stage.

#### *Level of maturity of school–community partnership*

Table 8 in Chapter 4 presented a summary of the key characteristics of effective school–community partnerships at different levels of maturity, indicating that partnership maturity determines the extent to which leadership is shared within and outside the school. For example, leadership roles in the early initiation stage are usually undertaken by school staff in communities with early and mid partnerships (Walla Walla and Cooktown), with formal leaders tending to play a more controlling and structured role in initiating and developing the partnerships than principals in communities with more mature partnerships (for example, Cowell, Meander). Interestingly, the principals in the less mature communities were both appointments from outside the community, appointed with a specific job to do. The principal at Walla Walla was appointed to 'either close down the school or rejuvenate it', while the principal at Cooktown was appointed to facilitate the amalgamation of the primary and secondary schools into one campus. This meant that much of their time was spent building relationships and trust amongst school and community members, an important foundation for collaborative leadership (Purdue et al. 2000) and for building social capital (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000). These principals also recognised the importance of quickly co-opting long-serving school and community members to help legitimise initiatives. This meant it took longer to progress through each stage of the partnership development process, with the sustainability stage often being triggered by external (policy) factors accordingly. During the later stages of development in early and mid partnerships, leadership roles were undertaken by community members, usually in close association with school staff.

In mature partnerships, leadership roles in initiating projects were more likely to be undertaken by community members, and the support of school staff later sought to develop the initiative further. In two of the more mature partnership communities, Meander and Cowell, the principals were 'inside'

appointments who had a reasonably long history within the school and community, having been invited to apply for their positions. Because they were already known and trusted, these principals were able to spend less time creating the conditions to build effective partnerships, and were able to move the process along more quickly. Interestingly, in these communities, the sustainability stage of the partnership was triggered internally, rather than by external factors such as policy. In Margaret River, although the principal was an outside appointment, he came to a mature community used to taking control of its own future. Building on his formal ties with two key groups (a service club and a church), and working with established community members, the principal was able to step back from projects after initiation and take a less controlling role, in accordance with the established collaborative leadership processes already evident within the community.

In terms of the eight leadership roles discussed earlier, the findings indicate that the extent to which each leadership role is exercised depends on the level of maturity of the school–community partnership. The leadership role of teacher (discussed earlier) is a good example of this. In Walla Walla, where the school–community partnership is less mature, this role focuses on building individual confidence in assuming leadership positions, mainly amongst school staff. As communities move towards greater maturity in terms of their school–community partnerships (for example, in Cooktown and Cowell), the teacher leadership role focuses on further developing individual confidence in assuming leadership positions amongst staff but also amongst wider community members. In mature communities such as Margaret River or Meander, where individual confidence is already high, the role focuses more on facilitating partnerships as learning communities (New South Wales Department of School Education 1995; Beare 2001, 2002), in which both school and community make extensive use of each other's resources and shared knowledge base. The implications for partnership development of the level of partnership maturity are clear. Each partnership is different, and the principal and others in leadership roles must have a thorough understanding of the capacity of individuals and the community, as well as an understanding of the most appropriate strategies to facilitate continuous learning within the partnership.

#### *Community orientation*

The case studies, and Figures 3 to 7 in Chapter 4, indicated that to some extent all of the communities studied had an outward-looking focus, based on the knowledge that community capacity building required extensive resources and that not all of these were available within the limited confines of geographical community boundaries. In most sites, but particularly in the more isolated sites of Cowell and Cooktown, this outward orientation was born of necessity, given their distance from institutional and other services located in larger regional centres or in State capital cities. Interestingly, however, Table 9 in Chapter 4 does not indicate a strong positive relationship between more mature school–community partnerships, and the extent to which community members

exhibit an outward-focused mindset. Nor does Table 9 indicate a strong positive relationship between high levels of bridging and linking social capital, and an outward-focused community mindset.

For example, an overwhelming majority of respondents in Cowell viewed their community in local terms, as consisting of the township itself and immediate surrounds, but not including other neighbouring communities such as Cleve and Kimba. This somewhat inward-looking perception is surprising, given that Cowell is part of a formal cluster arrangement for both education and health services, and given the regional focus on education and training represented by the Eyre Peninsula Regional Strategy. Although the case study clearly indicates that Cowell is at present undergoing change, from a largely inward to an outward community focus, and Figure 4 in Chapter 4 clearly documents that community's broad network of external or linking ties, Table 9 suggests that this external focus is not yet evident in terms of a shared community mindset. This may be partly explained by the nature of the participants selected for this study, and partly by the limitations of the community perception maps presented to participants, which were biased towards a relatively narrow, geographical view of community (see Chapter 3 for further details). It is therefore important to treat these findings with some caution. However, it is suggested that the findings may indicate that changes to practice come about more quickly than changes in attitudes and beliefs (mindsets), which only occur when individuals and communities have had adequate time to critically reflect on, and internalise, a new community identity. This would support findings from group, partnership and communities of practice research (Mulford et al. 1981; Wenger 1998; Cardno 1999; West 1999; Schippers, Den Hartog & Koopman 2001; Mulford 2002; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002) that critical reflection or reflexivity is essential to the process of culture change and identity formation.

Even in Margaret River, with its mature school–community partnership and extensive linking social capital, many respondents still favoured an extended community perception, rather than the expected regional or broader community perception. Given the proactive and outward-looking nature of the Margaret River community and its knowledge and use of extensive external networks reported in the case study, the relatively low percentage of respondents with a regional community perspective is somewhat unexpected. Again, it is likely that this variation may be partly due to participant bias and the bias of the community perception maps discussed above. However, as in the case of Cowell discussed above, questions still remain relating to the need to change community mindsets as part of the broader process of rural community development, the amount of time needed to achieve this change, and the role of critical reflection as a catalyst to this process.

### *Public relations*

Findings from the case studies also strongly support research by Combs and Bailey (1992) and Carlsmith and Railsback (2001) regarding the critical role of public relations in developing and sustaining school–community partnerships. Publicity, as one aspect of public relations, impacted positively on the partnerships in several ways. For example, principals and others within the schools displayed a measure of entrepreneurialism in terms of their ability to identify and market their school's unique attributes within and outside the community. In short, they took initiative for their own publicity, by developing web pages, submitting articles to local media outlets, and by regularly participating in activities such as agricultural field days. A number of these publicity opportunities involved the whole school community in their planning and implementation; these opportunities for interaction further strengthening linkages between school and community.

The findings also indicate that positive publicity of school–community partnerships builds community pride and identity. Respondents in several communities noted that publicity that accompanied programs and lauded the success of initiatives had positive spin-offs in increasing community pride and fostering a sense of community identity. The link between publicity and partnership identity was discussed earlier in relation to the critical reflection stage of partnership development. National recognition was important in confirming the boldness of the initiatives and the ability of communities to determine their own futures, in Cooktown and Cowell especially. These two communities had not previously seen themselves as national leaders or communities with special skills. The people of Margaret River and Meander included many new settlers who were used to choosing and influencing their own futures, but here, too, positive publicity about successful school–community partnerships was reported to reinforce community pride and identity.

However, principals, staff and community members in each of the study sites also demonstrated a high level awareness of what Carlsmith and Railsback (2001) called the 'power of public relations'. They valued two-way communication between school and community, and actively sought community input into all aspects of the school's operation. This supports findings by McSwan, Clinch and Store (2001) that effective school and community partnerships are based on 'an exchange or sharing of knowledge between the community and the "experts"' (p. 31). They targetted specific sectors of the community not usually involved with the school, and set about developing meaningful and purposeful relationships with them (for example, the retired citizens involved in the volunteer reading scheme in Margaret River). They also demonstrated an awareness of the importance of dealing with image problems and community misperceptions of the school quickly and decisively, which Carlsmith and Railsback (2001) identify as a key function of effective school public relations. In addition, schools in the study actively sought information that would allow them to further enhance their partnership with the community, from sources both internal and external to the

community. One example of this is the extent to which principals in each of the five focal schools demonstrated a keenness to participate in this study, despite their heavy workloads and numerous other conflicting priorities, and their advice that participation in the study had acted as a catalyst for the development of further school–community partnerships. Each of these actions further contributed to the building of bridging and linking social capital (Woolcock 1999), or generalised and institutional trust (Stone & Hughes 2001), within the community.

Another important outcome of good school public relations was the promotion of positive perceptions of the school to staff, students and parents, supporting research by Combs and Bailey (1992). Attention to positive school public relations facilitated a positive attitude amongst staff and stimulated greater school–community involvement. For all schools, but particularly St Paul’s, an independent boarding school located in a small rural community, good public relations played an important role in breaking down barriers between school and community, and in demonstrating the school’s willingness and ability to contribute to the community. Within all sites, positive perceptions influenced the decision of some parents to send their children to the school, influenced the decision of parents and other community members to become more closely involved with the school, and also influenced the transfer decisions of teachers, in that almost all staff in the study sites were there because they chose to be. Transfer decisions of teachers were influenced by the school’s reputation and/or the desirable lifestyle of the community, confirming findings by Edwards et al. (2000) that partnership activity is positively associated with communities to which people have moved for lifestyle reasons.

## **The influence of policy and other external factors**

### *Policy as a driver or trigger for change*

External systemic factors (primarily Commonwealth and State government policy which, in effect, allows or permits change, by providing resources) influenced the building and use of bridging and linking social capital in all communities, most notably through the VET in schools programs at Cowell, Margaret River and Cooktown; Meander’s online access centre, and Margaret River’s SES cadets. Many of these opportunities were the direct result of education and training system policy, while others were provided by a variety of other government and private funding initiatives. Not surprisingly, the influence of State and Commonwealth government policy was more keenly felt in the four State government schools within our study, as they had a legal responsibility to implement policy, as compared with the independent school which did not have such a responsibility. In the case of the latter, funding and opportunities provided by private sources, such as sponsorship for the school’s agriculture program by a national seed company, assumed particular importance.

External policy was not the driving or motivating force in developing most of the school–community partnerships reported in this study. Rather, the schools and communities all had separately developed a vision for their youth and community, and used funding and policy opportunities to help realise that vision. For example, introduction of the VET in schools and cadets in high schools programs in Margaret River provided opportunities for the school and community to realise their vision in terms of providing a whole-of-community education for youth. The Cowell community could see that opportunities provided by VET in schools funding, and by the recently introduced State department of education’s *Partnerships 21* funding arrangement, would allow it to realise its visions for youth, and would further the integration of the school into the community.

What is particularly interesting about the schools in this study is the extent to which they pre-empted policy direction in terms of school–community partnerships, and were proactive in developing policy support to meet with their vision. Meander is a good example of pre-empting policy, already having in place a number of informal or semi formal processes and structures to facilitate the building of social capital, well before the State department of education policies in respect of the Assisted Schools Self Review (now known as the School Improvement Review) and the *Learning Together* vision for Tasmanian education (Department of Education Tasmania 2001), were introduced.

Each of the schools in the study was constantly scanning the horizon for possible learning opportunities from a wide variety of sources; they were characterised by an ability to think outside the box and to mould opportunities for their own purposes. These findings support both the ‘rule bending’ strategy described by Schorr (1997) and the policy shaping strategy of Miller (1995). The *Step Ahead* VET in schools partnership in Cooktown is a good illustration of this. When the Commonwealth government’s seed funding for the partnership ended, the State department of education took over funding for the position of *Step Ahead* classroom teacher, as part of the regular staffing profile of the school. In addition, the school drove policy change at a national level, in terms of influencing revised guidelines for the funding of VET in schools programs. Both of these significant policy changes were influenced by several factors, which Miller (1995) identified as strategies for developing effective policy support. Key factors included building a community coalition to demonstrate widespread support for the initiative (represented by the broad-based membership of the VET in schools partnership management committee), and education of public officials (State and Commonwealth funding body officials accepted invitations to visit the school to observe the program and talk with key stakeholders). These strategies were successful in allowing the school to demonstrate to the State department of education and to the national VET in schools funding body, the importance and value of the partnership for youth and the community.

In general, evidence from the study sites suggests that the key role of policy has been to legitimise school–community partnerships which, in turn, has fostered community support for the initiatives and increased the likelihood of their sustainability. The principal is the official channel through which policy impacts on the school, and the legitimising of school–community partnerships (discussed earlier in the section on ‘The keyholder role of the principal in partnership development’) reflects this role. The legitimising role of policy is consistent with the findings of other research into the influence of policy on the sustainability of school–community partnerships, in which Miller (1995) concluded that ‘[p]olicy provides the basis upon which a program can sustain support over time’ (p. 13).

The findings indicate that policy also influenced the development of school–community partnerships, by triggering the move from the initiation to development stage, and again later from the critical reflection to sustainability stage. For example, in the VET in schools partnerships examined in Cooktown, Cowell and Margaret River, in particular, a key stimulus for partnerships moving from the initiation to development stage was the requirement of the funding body (the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation, now known as the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation) that the partnership be formalised by setting up a management committee comprising school and community partners. It should be noted, however, that the move from the initiation to the development stage in most partnerships was also driven by the enthusiasm, determination and vision of key individuals, including the principal, and the extent to which they were able to use their identity and knowledge resources to develop the partnership.

There are clear examples of policy triggering the move from the critical reflection to the sustainability stage in Cooktown and Margaret River. For example, in Cooktown, the need to complete a submission for continued funding of the VET in schools partnership beyond the original three years, and the changing guidelines for those submissions, meant that the partnership needed to undergo a process of review in terms of its original goals, in order to determine a new direction that would guarantee continued funding. Most likely new partners would need to be co-opted to the committee, suggesting a new cycle of partnership learning would need to take place. In Margaret River, on the return visit of the writer in 2001, there were indications that substantial proposed Statewide changes to the senior secondary curriculum would have implications for the future of their VET in schools partnership, as discussed earlier. Because the program had been considered to be running effectively up until that time, as evidenced by the disbanding of the management committee, the move from the critical reflection to the sustainability was very much triggered externally, by proposed policy changes.



### *Policy, other systemic factors and partnership continuity*

Continuity of human and financial resources were two key themes identified as impacting on school–community partnerships, and this is consistent with the literature (Barr 1997; Bowie 1998; Malley, Frigo & Robinson 1999; Johns et al. 2000a; CRLRA 2000, 2001; Kilpatrick, Bell & Kilpatrick 2001; McSwan, Clinch & Store 2001; James & St. Leger 2003). The issue of the availability of financial resourcing to facilitate the initiation of partnerships has already been discussed in the previous section, but issues of continuity of financial resources were also found to be important. The findings illustrate that resource continuity (or lack of continuity) impacts on all stages of the development of school–community linkages, but is critical in allowing the partnership to develop and reach the sustainability stage. This is supported by research conducted by the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia (2001), and by more recent research by James and St. Leger (2003).

To a large extent, continuity of resources is related to policy, in that guidelines for a number of school–community partnerships specify particular requirements to ensure program sustainability, including structures (for example, management committees comprised of school and community representatives) and review processes to ensure that both seed funding and additional funding be linked to an evaluation of partnership outcomes. For example, continuity of personnel provided by the VET in schools management committee in Cooktown ensured that this valuable school–community linkage remained sustainable even though formal school leadership had changed. In this case, as well as in the Margaret River and Cowell VET in schools partnerships, continuity was provided by community members; in other cases, continuity of programs was largely provided by school staff (for example, the equine teacher and school farm manager at St Paul's provided continuity for that school's agriculture and equine studies programs).

The findings also highlight the negative or potentially negative influence of lack of resource continuity. For example, lack of continuity of financial resources, or at least lack of certainty about continuity of financial resources, was placing pressure on the sustainability of the VET in schools partnership in Cooktown, in terms of the time needed to research and put in place other funding arrangements. Related to this, is the apparent imbalance between the availability of government seed funding for initiating projects such as VET in schools programs, as compared with reduced levels of funding for maintaining and sustaining projects. These findings echo similar concerns expressed by Edwards et al. (2000). There would seem to be a need for review of funding cycles for school–community partnerships, given the inconsistency reported between the traditional three-year seed funding cycle for initiatives such as VET in schools programs, compared with the usual five-year time frame for the development of initiatives in the business sector. This extended developmental time frame could well have the potential to impact significantly on partnership continuity, and hence, on outcomes for youth and the wider community.

The sustainability of Margaret River's volunteer reading program highlights some of the concerns regarding lack of resource continuity. While the problems in Margaret River were not entirely due to lack of resource continuity, this exacerbated an already existing problem. Unable to secure initial State government funding to set up the partnership, the school decided to 'go it alone', with the strong support of the school principal and several staff members. However, lack of initial resources and support at a policy level, coupled with lack of continuity of financial and human (volunteer tutor) resources, had placed pressure on the program coordinator, and were a potential threat to partnership sustainability. The problem of excessive pressures being placed on program coordinators is documented in the literature (see, for example, Frost 2000), and would appear to be linked not only to a heavy workload, but to stress caused by uncertainty and relative lack of control and certainty over both financial and human resources.

The negative consequences of lack of continuity of staffing on the development of the VET in schools partnership are illustrated in Cowell, indicating that other systemic factors not directly related to partnership development, such as State department of education staffing policies and practices (including staff transfers and promotions), also impact on partnership continuity. In Cowell, valuable opportunities for using the bridging social capital that had been built during the initiation phase of the partnership were lost, when certain staff members, whose values, attitudes and motivations were at odds with those of the partnership stakeholders, failed to utilise the expertise of oyster growers on an ongoing basis. Whilst this set back the development phase of the VET in schools partnership, the overall strength of commitment to the partnership by school staff and the community, ensured the partnership recovered, and went on to report considerable success in achieving its goals.

## **Summary**

While leadership is a crucial determinant of partnership effectiveness and sustainability, a number of other factors related to leadership are influential in partnership development. Perhaps the most important of these factors are organisational structures, processes and culture within schools that encourage and support collaboration, as well as Commonwealth and State government policy that has encouraged and supported the development of a range of school-community partnerships over recent years. School structures, leadership processes, and culture that facilitate organisational learning and distributive leadership, reflect strong levels of bonding social capital within the school, which has been shown to be an important foundation on which bridging and linking social capital are built. In particular, effective partnerships reflect a match between school and community leadership processes; that is, the level of maturity of the school-community partnership determines the speed at which the partnership develops and the extent to which leadership is shared within and outside the school. Effective partnerships seek opportunities to develop their vision from a variety of sources,

including funding and other support provided by government, church and other sources. In these cases, policy supports rather than drives the partnership, and is important in ensuring partnership sustainability by providing for continuity of resources. In particular, the study provides examples of moulding policy that is not supportive of the partnership, to make it fit the vision that schools and communities have developed. Policy is particularly influential in moving partnerships forward; that is, in triggering the move from one stage of the process to the next, to prevent the process from stalling. The move from initiation to development, and later from critical reflection to sustainability, is strongly influenced by policy requirements. Policy, however, is less supportive of the move from development to critical reflection, a stage which has not been given sufficient emphasis in partnership development policy, practice, and research to date.

## **Implications of this study**

### **For practice**

- The study found that schools with effective partnerships with their rural communities had strong bonding social capital which, in turn, facilitated organisational learning. Partnerships were integral to these school's core activities, and represented a shared school and community vision to which all partners were strongly committed. The implication for school principals and community leaders is that prior to partnership development, close attention needs to be paid to developing shared values and a common vision regarding the purpose and outcomes of the partnership, both within the school, and within the broader community. This will provide a shared framework for the development of partnership thinking, and will act as a buffer against restrictive policy requirements, and against potentially negative influences such as differing agendas or unequal power resources of some stakeholder groups, which have the potential to benefit certain stakeholders or stakeholder groups at the expense of the partnership.
- Good school public relations, a two-way process of communication, consolidate and strengthen each school's relationship with its community. The implication for rural schools is that they need to focus on developing good public relations. This is both a prerequisite to building effective partnerships, as well as a necessary factor contributing to the effectiveness and sustainability of partnerships. Public relations ensure the partnership receives feedback on partnership goals, processes and outcomes, and demonstrates to stakeholders that their input is valued. In addition, the value of publicising partnership successes must not be overlooked, as an important affirmation of partnership identity.
- Partnership development takes place in a number of sequential stages, and it is necessary to move through each of these stages without trying to short circuit or rush the process. The time needed at

each stage of the process is determined by several factors, including the level of maturity of the partnership. The implications for principals and rural community leaders of an understanding of the level of maturity of the partnership are clear—each partnership is different, and those in leadership roles must have a thorough understanding of the current and potential capacity of individuals and of the community. They must then match their capacity-building strategies to the level of maturity of the partnership.

- Leadership of school–community partnerships is a collective process, involving formal and informal leaders from within the school and community. Principals and rural community leaders need to identify a range of leaders from school and community sources, and to nurture them in their roles. The aim should be to match the skills, knowledge and experience of individuals with specific leadership roles but, most importantly, to develop amongst leaders, a strong commitment to partnership culture. Specifically, boundary crossers, who speak the language of both school and community, need to be identified and nurtured early in the partnership. This may mean offering them employment within the school, as was the case in Cooktown where a key boundary crosser was appointed coordinator of the VET in schools program.
- The critical reflection stage of partnership development, and the associated leadership role of mentor, are central to partnership sustainability. This has implications for principals and rural community leaders who need to continue to develop their own group facilitation skills specifically in relation to critical reflection, and to support and develop the skills of other mentors by identifying appropriate professional development and community leadership training opportunities. In addition, the process of critical reflection needs to be developed and nurtured amongst school staff, and amongst community groups and organisations, as part of their ongoing professional practice.
- The keyholder role of principals in partnership development is critical. This has implications for rural school principals in terms of their educational philosophy and beliefs. Specifically, principals who have a firm commitment to lifelong learning for students and the community, and to the role of schools as a centre of community lifelong learning, are well positioned to facilitate effective and mutually beneficial school–community partnerships.
- Of concern, are indications that the issue of student and youth involvement in leadership of key school–community partnerships has not received sufficient attention. Given that youth are one of the key beneficiary groups of such partnerships who represent the future for rural communities, this has long-term implications. Rural schools and communities need to provide opportunities for students and youth to be actively involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating

partnerships, along with other stakeholder groups. This is vital if future community leaders are to be nurtured in rural communities.

### **For policy**

- The significance of the principal as a keyholder to the development of rural community social capital needs to be recognised. This broadening of the principal's role has implications for the workload and professional development of rural school principals. Principals need to be allocated time and resources to undertake this role, as well as appropriate and ongoing professional development. This may include a closer alignment between principals' professional development, and rural community leadership, programs. There are also implications for senior staff in rural schools in terms of workload and professional development, who may be increasingly required to undertake additional duties previously undertaken by the principal, and to work with the principal in the development of rural community social capital.
- The fact that there is a great variation in the level of maturity of different school–community partnerships has implications for rural education and rural community development policy. Specifically, greater policy flexibility is required in terms of time and financial resources, to take into account local and regional differences, and the sequential nature of the partnership development process. This suggests that the traditional three-year funding cycle for a number of school–community partnerships (including VET in schools partnerships) may need to be reviewed, in the light of the more common five-year time frame for the development of initiatives in the business sector.
- The greater focus by funding bodies on output (delivery) aims as opposed to process (facilitative) aims has implications for partnerships, in terms of restrictive funding regimes that emphasise the earlier stages of partnership development, rather than critical reflection and sustainability. If partnerships do not have adequate time or resources to move to the sustainability stage they are at risk of stalling and eventually disbanding, with the consequent loss of social capital and collective capacity that has been built. Again this suggests greater policy flexibility is needed, including the allocation of more time and resources at the critical reflection and sustainability stages of partnership development, to allow for a partnership culture to be embedded within rural schools and their communities.
- The blurring of leadership role orientation in rural communities, so that some leaders assume both facilitative and delivery roles, has implications for rural teacher training and professional development programs, as well as for rural community leadership courses. Specifically, there is

a need for these programs to develop within individuals, a broad base of facilitative and delivery leadership skills, knowledge and attitudes.

### **Areas for further research identified by this thesis**

- Research into prerequisites for effective school–community partnerships

This study suggests that schools with strong bonding social capital are well placed to develop and sustain effective partnerships with their communities. It is recommended that further research be conducted, across a range of rural and urban schools and across a range of different school–community partnerships, to confirm this finding. Such research should also investigate other key partnership prerequisites, and the extent of their influence on partnership development and sustainability.

- Further research into the process of developing school–community partnerships

This study adds to a small but growing body of research into the way school–community partnerships build community social capital. However, further research is needed to document the process of school–community partnership development and related leadership roles. Such research needs to explore in greater detail the way in which the process facilitates partnership sustainability. It is recommended the critical reflection and sustainability stages, and the leadership roles of mentor and sustainer associated with each of these stages, be examined in more detail. This research should be conducted in larger rural and regional schools, as well as in urban schools, and should include examination of a range of partnerships at different levels of maturity. The aim would be to develop a comprehensive picture of the partnership development process, including strategies to facilitate critical reflection across a range of different partnerships.

- Research into the application of these findings to other types of community partnerships

The findings presented in this study relate specifically to the process of developing and sustaining school–community partnerships. However, it is believed that this partnership development process may have far broader application across a range of community partnerships, not just those involving the school. Research is therefore needed to ascertain the extent to which the partnership development process documented in this study, is applicable across a range of other community contexts, both rural and urban.

- Research into strengthening linkages between education, health and local government in rural areas

The education, health and local government sectors represent the key (and often only) institutional sources within rural communities, with extensive resources and expertise at their disposal. While this study illustrated linkages between the school, health sector and local government, in some cases these linkages were superficial, and did not reflect a commitment by the parties to an ongoing partnership. Given that a whole of government approach to community development in rural and regional Australia is still an under-researched area, there is an urgent need for research into leadership that will facilitate the development and sustainability of effective and ongoing linkages between education, health and local government, particularly in rural and remote areas, and including Indigenous communities. It is recommended that this include action research by the stakeholders, reflective of a bottom up, or endogenous, approach to community development.

- Research into strengthening linkages between rural schools and universities

This study revealed the existence of some linkages between rural schools and regional universities, although these linkages tended to be incidental and related to other community initiatives, rather than to educational outcomes for students. It is recommended that research, and particularly action research, be conducted into the development of partnerships between regional universities and rural schools, in order to enhance the range of opportunities available to rural students, and to provide a source of additional leadership and leadership training in these communities. Adapted from a North American initiative, the School at the Centre project being piloted by James Cook University in some rural schools in far north Queensland, is one example of such a partnership (Northern Priority Country Area Program and Rural Education Research and Development Centre 2001).

- Research into developing leaders for school–community partnerships

Findings from this study show that people who undertake leadership roles in school–community partnerships have both the knowledge and skills to do so, as well as the confidence and willingness to work for the partnership. In other words, they have both the knowledge and identity resources required to develop social capital. More research is needed into where and how different leaders develop these skills, and the factors that motivate them to undertake leadership roles. This should include research into the content of teacher training and professional development courses, recruitment criteria for staff in rural schools, and research into the content and focus of community leadership programs.

## Conclusions

The web of learning networks and partnerships built by rural schools in collaboration with their communities, represent learning communities. Within these communities, the capacity of students, staff and parents is built, thus ensuring greater responsiveness to the demands of the knowledge economy. However, these learning communities form part of the learning networks that comprise the broader geographical region (rural village, town, local government area) which some refer to as learning cities. Rural schools also play a critical role in building learning cities, because of the way they bring together diverse community sectors and facilitate the development of new learning partnerships, extending well beyond the school, and impacting on many areas of community social, economic, and environmental wellbeing. However, the way in which resource are developed and used within learning communities (and learning cities) will determine the extent of their impact on rural sustainability.

This study is important because it provides a clear framework, set within the Australian rural context, for the further development of school–community partnerships. What is different about this study is that it documents the process through which five rural schools have impacted on their communities, rather than focusing primarily on documenting and/or measuring the contributions themselves. By investigating the process in detail, a clear picture of the way in which rural schools build community capacity, while at the same time, increasing their own support base, emerges. The study therefore contributes new and timely knowledge regarding the links between partnership development and the development of community social capital. This knowledge is vital for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers as it reflects the complex and long-term nature of partnership development, by closely linking each stage to the use and/or development of bonding, bridging and linking social capital within the school and broader community.

The most significant piece of new knowledge to emerge from this study is the identification of the critical reflection stage of the partnership development process, and its importance in furthering learning amongst partners, and in affirming partnership identity. This new knowledge is vital in helping us to understand why some partnerships are effective and sustainable, while others are not. It also provides necessary information for practitioners and policymakers to ensure groundwork during the earlier stages of partnership development is maximised, and that valuable community building efforts are not allowed to dissipate once the initial partnership goals have been achieved at the development stage. Given that many partnerships are funded externally, this knowledge should also ensure that the funding and support from external sources, together with the substantial input of time and resources from schools and communities, are used to maximise outcomes not only for youth, but also for the wider community. In this way, the partnership comes to represent a continuous learning cycle for rural communities—that is, a process through which community capacity is built. One of



the most important lessons to emerge from this study is that those who undertake the task of leadership for school–community partnerships are forging new paths, and they will not always get it right. However, the study clearly shows that when partners are committed to a process of continuous learning, and when the partnership process supports this, mistakes made along the way become a valuable form of whole community learning.

This study is also important because it contributes new knowledge in relation to the leadership roles required at each stage of the partnership development process, and provides a breakdown of school and community leadership sources for each role. It is intended that this knowledge will encourage rural schools to seek partners from a variety of community sources, and particularly from sources that they may not have previously considered. It is also expected that individuals and groups from within rural communities will be encouraged to seek, develop and sustain relationships with their schools, in the understanding that youth and the broader community will reap the rewards of such a partnership. Above all, the study demonstrates that leadership for effective partnerships values and utilises the skills, knowledge and experience of the whole community. Although leaders come from a range of different backgrounds, they have one thing in common—their commitment to the partnership.

One final word of caution. Despite current policy rhetoric surrounding partnerships and learning communities, policy alone cannot ensure partnership effectiveness. This, of course, is not to say that policy does not play a key role in facilitating partnerships, because this study clearly shows that it does. The study also indicates that there needs to be better integration between rural community development policy and rural education policy, to facilitate resource sharing and to legitimise the role of rural schools in community development. However, while policy can help to facilitate this change, what is needed is a change in mindset whereby partnerships or collaborations become embedded within the culture of both school and community. Ultimately, effective school–community partnerships will depend on the vision of school and community leaders, and on the extent to which schools are valued as integral to the future of the community, and education is seen within the broader context of lifelong learning that spans all sectors of the community.

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**Appendix A**

**Signed attestations re authorship of dissertation**

## **Signed attestations re authorship of dissertation**

### **Chapter 1 Attestation**

All material in this chapter is new and was written by Susan Johns for this dissertation. The only exception is the section on the broader policy context of education partnerships in Australia, which is based on material written by Susan Johns for inclusion in Chapter 2 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Co-authors of the original report, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Professor Bill Mulford, and Ms Libby Prescott, all from the University of Tasmania, and Professor Ian Falk from the Northern Territory University, attest to the fact that Susan Johns is the sole author of all material contained in this chapter.

### **Chapter 2 Attestation**

This chapter draws in part on a literature review written by Susan Johns, which formed Chapter 2 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Approximately 50% of the material in Section One, 20% in Section Two and 20% in Section Three is taken from the original literature review. The significant difference is that this chapter covers the key concepts of social capital, and school and organisational leadership, in much greater depth, while the major topic in Section Three on school–community leadership processes, is entirely new. Co-authors of the original report, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Professor Bill Mulford, and Ms Libby Prescott, all from the University of Tasmania, and Professor Ian Falk from the Northern Territory University, attest to the fact that Susan Johns is the sole author of all material contained in this chapter.

### **Chapter 3 Attestation**

This chapter draws in part on a methodology chapter written by Susan Johns, which formed Chapter 3 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Approximately 25% of the material, including the tables, is taken from the original methodology chapter. The significant difference is that material on the following topics is new: qualitative research; case study strategy of inquiry; verification procedures; the case studies and cross-case analysis; and limitations of the study. Material on data collection and data analysis has been expanded and developed. Co-authors of the final report, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Professor Bill Mulford and Ms Libby Prescott, all from the University of Tasmania, and Professor Ian Falk from the Northern Territory University, attest to the fact that Susan Johns is the sole author of all material in this chapter.

### **Chapter 4 Attestation**

All material in this chapter is the original work of Susan Johns and, apart from Table 9 and the related definitions of local, extended and regional communities, is new. Table 9 and definitions first appeared in Chapter 3 of the original report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Co-authors of the original report, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Professor Bill Mulford, and Ms Libby Prescott, all from the University of Tasmania, and Professor Ian Falk from the Northern Territory University, attest to the fact that Susan Johns is the sole author of all material contained in this chapter.

### **Chapter 5 Attestation**

This chapter draws in part on discussion written by Susan Johns, which formed Chapters 9 and 10 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Approximately 25% of the material is taken from the original discussion. The significant difference is that presentation and discussion of the following topics is new to this chapter: bonding, bridging and linking and social capital; Figure 8 on the process of building and social capital through school–community partnership development; identification and discussion of the critical reflection stage of partnership development; Table 11 on leadership process, roles and sources and related discussion; implications of this study, and conclusions. Other discussion contained in sections on the partnership development process; leadership roles, characteristics and attributes, and influencing factors, expands and develops the material presented in the original report. Co-authors of the original report, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Professor Bill Mulford, and Ms Libby Prescott, all from the University of Tasmania, and Professor Ian Falk from the Northern Territory University, attest to the fact that Susan Johns is the sole author of all material contained in this chapter.

*(cont'd over)*

## **Appendix G**

### **Cooktown Case study**

This case study was written by Susan Johns, Bill Mulford and Ian Falk and appeared as Chapter 4 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Co-authors Professor Bill Mulford from the University of Tasmania and Professor Ian Falk from the Northern Territory University attest to the authorship of the case study as follows: Susan Johns (85%), Bill Mulford (10%) and Ian Falk (5%).

### **Cowell Case study**

This case study was written by Susan Johns and Libby Prescott and appeared as Chapter 5 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Co-author Ms Libby Prescott from the University of Tasmania attests to the authorship of the case study as follows: Susan Johns (70%) and Libby Prescott (30%).

### **Margaret River Case study**

This case study was written by Susan Johns and Libby Prescott and appeared as Chapter 6 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Co-author Ms Libby Prescott from the University of Tasmania attests to the authorship of the case study as follows: Susan Johns (90%) and Libby Prescott (10%).

### **Meander case study**

This case study was written by Libby Prescott, Susan Johns, and Sue Kilpatrick, and appeared as Chapter 7 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Co-authors Ms Libby Prescott and Dr Sue Kilpatrick from the University of Tasmania attest to the authorship of the case study as follows: Libby Prescott (90%), Susan Johns (5%), and Sue Kilpatrick (5%).

### **Walla Walla case study**

This case study was written by Sue Kilpatrick and Susan Johns, and appeared as Chapter 8 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development. Co-author Dr Sue Kilpatrick from the University of Tasmania attests to the authorship of the case study as follows: Sue Kilpatrick (90%) and Susan Johns (10%).

**WE, the undersigned, certify that the abovementioned details of authorship of each chapter/case study in the dissertation *An investigation of the way in which school and community leadership processes influence the role of schools in rural community development*, by Susan Maree Johns, represent a true and accurate record.**

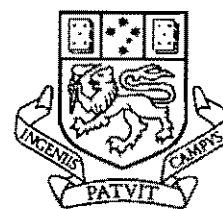
<b>Dr Sue Kilpatrick</b>	<b>Date</b> 21/7/03
<b>Professor Bill Mulford</b>	<b>Date</b> 17/7/03
<b>Professor Ian Falk</b>	<b>Date</b> 21/7/03
<b>Ms Libby Prescott</b>	<b>Date</b> 12/7/03

## **Appendix B**

### **Site selection**

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- Proposed study information
- Nomination letter
- Media release



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia

## **Re: Proposed study into school contribution to rural communities: Leadership issues**

### *Background to the project*

Researchers from the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia are conducting a study into the extent and nature of the contribution of schools to their rural/regional communities. The study will also investigate how the type of leadership within the school and community influences the extent and nature of this contribution.

Many small rural/regional communities are in crisis as they attempt to cope with the rapid pace of change brought about by globalisation of the economy, technological advancements, and the decline of traditional industries. Unemployment, declining population and geographical isolation are common problems. Schools are one of, if not the only, major service present in many small rural/regional areas. In addition to providing education, they provide significant opportunities for interaction within the community.

### *How can you help?*

We propose to conduct our study in communities located within five States/Territories, and we are seeking your suggestions for suitable study sites. The sites must be small rural/regional communities in which the local school(s) play an active role. To be eligible for consideration, any communities that you suggest will need to meet the following criteria:

### *Criteria for selection of community for study*

1. Community must have a population of less than 10,000 people.
2. The local school(s) must play an active and ongoing role in improving social and economic outcomes for the community. There needs to be demonstrated evidence of a close partnership between the school and one or more of the following local organisations: industry; large and small business; government, and community groups. These partnerships are many and varied, but might include:
  - the school as an integral partner with local government and community organisations in developing and maintaining an ongoing community arts or other program which fosters cohesion and a sense of shared community;

Collaborative Research in Vocational Education and Training

PO Box 1214 Launceston  
Tasmania 7250 Australia  
Telephone 03 6324 3018  
Facsimile 03 6324 3040  
E-mail Sue.Kilpatrick@utas.edu.au  
<http://www.educ.utas.edu.au/CRLRA>



- the establishment of a VET (Vocational Education and Training) in Schools program that is responsive to the needs of local industry and small business as well as providing youth with the incentive to remain in and contribute actively to their community;
  - the school working with local community organisations and businesses to celebrate diversity by developing initiatives to mainstream those with disabilities, or those with ethnic or indigenous backgrounds.
3. The school(s) needs to be physically located within the community (for the purposes of this study, School of the Air and other forms of correspondence education or home schooling are excluded).
  4. The length of time that the school-community partnership has been operating successfully is not relevant. We are interested in studying communities at different stages of the process: from communities which are in the early stages of establishing school-community partnerships, through to communities which have been enjoying successful school-community partnerships for a number of years.
  5. We would welcome suggestions of indigenous communities in which the school(s) play an active role.

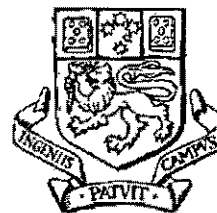
This study is important and timely because it will document the contributions of schools to rural/regional community development. It will also identify how the success of school-community partnerships is influenced by community leadership. The outcomes of this study will be recommendations to assist policy makers when making decisions about the provision of education in rural/regional communities, and about the implementation of rural and community development programs. Policy recommendations will also feed into educational leadership courses on strategies and modes of leadership which enhance school-community partnerships for the benefit of rural/regional communities.

Please feel free to suggest one or more communities for possible inclusion in the study, by completing the attached form. Suggestions need to be received at the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia by Monday 15 November 1999.

Yours sincerely

Susan Johns for  
Dr Sue Kilpatrick  
Associate Director

Attention: Susan Johns, Centre for Research & Learning in Regional Australia



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

SCHOOL CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL COMMUNITIES: LEADERSHIP ISSUES

Suggested Community for Study

Your details:

Name:.....

Address:.....

Phone:.....

Email:.....

Organisation that you are representing (if applicable):.....

Community Details:

Name and location (State) of community:.....

Local school(s) active in the community:

	<i>Name of School</i>	<i>Name of Principal</i>	<i>School contact details (address/phone)</i>
<b>School 1</b>			
<b>School 2</b> <i>(if applicable)</i>			
<b>School 3</b> <i>(if applicable)</i>			
<b>School 4</b> <i>(if applicable)</i>			

*\*Note: If you wish to nominate more than one community, please photocopy this sheet.*

When you have completed this form, please return by **Monday 15 November**.

Fax to: (03) 63243040      Email to: Susan.Johns@utas.edu.au

Mail to: Susan Johns, CRLRA, University of Tasmania, PO Box 1214, Launceston TAS 7250

# MEDIA RELEASE

23 September, 1999

ATTENTION: RURAL EDITORS/WRITERS

## EDUCATION RESEARCHERS NEED YOUR HELP

New research by a team from the University of Tasmania will investigate the contribution made by schools to their rural or regional communities.

The project, which will be centred on communities of less than 10,000 people throughout Australia, will be conducted by researchers from the University's Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia (CRLRA) and Leadership for Learning Research Group (LLRG).

Specifically, the research will look at the extent and nature of the contribution of schools to their communities. The study will also investigate how the type of leadership within the school and community influences the extent and nature of this contribution.

Researchers are seeking suggestions as to possible study sites. Project leader and Associate Director of the CRLRA, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, said that the sites must be small rural/regional communities in which the local school or schools play an active role.

She said that to be eligible for consideration as a possible study site, the following criteria should be met:

- Population of less than 10,000 people;
- Demonstrated evidence of a close partnership between the school and the community, including one or more of the following local organisations: local business, industry, government or community groups; and
- At least one school must be physically located within the community.

Dr Kilpatrick said that the length of time that the school-community partnership had been operating was not relevant.

"We are interested in studying communities at different stages of the process, from communities which are in the early stages of establishing school-community partnerships, through to communities which have been enjoying successful school-community partnerships for a number of years".

"We would also welcome suggestions of indigenous communities in which the schools play an active role," she said.

Dr Kilpatrick said that the vital role that schools can and do play in community development was often overlooked.

"This study is important and timely because it will document the contributions of schools to rural/regional community development. It will also identify how the success of school-community partnerships is influenced by community leadership". Dr Kilpatrick said that results of the study will be used as recommendations to assist policy makers when making decisions about the provision of education in rural/regional communities, and about the implementation of rural and community development programs.

"Many small rural/regional communities are in crisis as they attempt to cope with the rapid pace of change brought about by globalisation of the economy, technological advancements and the decline of traditional industries. Unemployment, declining population and geographical isolation are common problems".

"Schools are one of, if not the only, major service present in many small rural/regional areas. In addition to providing education, they provide significant opportunities for interaction within the community," Dr Kilpatrick said.

- If your community would like to be considered as a possible research site, or if you would like further information on the project, you should contact Mrs Susan Johns at the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia at the University of Tasmania in Launceston, phone (03) 6324 3524, fax (03) 6324 3040 or email [Susan.Johns@utas.edu.au](mailto:Susan.Johns@utas.edu.au)

**Information released by:** Media Liaison Office at Launceston. Tel: (03) 6324 3273.

**Appendix C**  
**Interview schedules**

---

## **SCHOOL CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL COMMUNITIES: LEADERSHIP ISSUES**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 1: SCHOOL STAFF**

**1. How would you describe your local community?**

- What sort of changes have been happening in the community in the last five years? How have these changes affected the community?
- When people want to get things done (e.g. build a skateboard facility for youth, establish a community on-line access centre), how do they go about it?

**2. Briefly describe the main characteristics of your school.**

- How does this school compare with others you have worked in?

**3. How have things changed in your school in the past couple of years?**

- Why did the school make this change?
- How did this change come about?

**4. What are the main ways that your school interacts with the community?**

- How are these links established and maintained?
- What have been the outcomes of these links? Are these links likely to continue?
- Have there been any unexpected spinoffs from these partnerships with the community?
- Has the school been involved in any health education programs?
- To what extent do the school and community share physical resources and expertise?

**5. In what ways are parents and community members involved in the school?**

- Has the role of parents in the school changed over the past few years?
- To what extent does parental involvement make a difference in your school?
- Does parental involvement in schools have wider community implications?

**6. Are there any other things that the school is involved in that have been initiated from outside the school?**

- To what extent do factors external to the school influence your school's relationship with the community?

**7. How involved are you in the local community?**

- How do you think your community involvement has influenced you personally? How do you think it has influenced you in your role within the school? In what way do you think you have made a difference in the local community because of your involvement in these activities?

## **SCHOOL CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL COMMUNITIES: LEADERSHIP ISSUES**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 2: YOUTH**

1. **How would you describe your local community?**
  - What is it like to be a young person living in this community?
  - How involved do you think young people are in making things happen in the community?
  - Do you think your community has changed much over the past few years? If yes, how are things different in the community now? How have these changes in the community affected young people? You in particular?
  - Do you think you will stay in this community?
2. **Tell me a bit about your school/the school you attended.**
  - (If applicable) How does this school compare with others you have been to?
  - How have things changed in your school over the past couple of years?
  - How involved were students in helping to make these changes happen?
  - What do you think about students being involved in decision making in the school?
3. **(For school leavers) What have you been doing since leaving school?**
  - What were the main things that influenced you in making this decision?
  - Do you think you will stay in this community?
4. **What are the main ways that your school interacts with the community?**
  - What sort of activity/ies do you participate in/have you participated in at school that involve other people/groups in the community?
  - What have been the outcomes of these links with the community?
  - Do you think these links are likely to continue?
  - Can you think of any unexpected benefits/spinoffs of these links between the school and community?
  - How much of your study at school is/was related to what's happening in your community?
  - Have there been any unexpected spinoffs from these projects?
5. **What extra activities are/were you involved in at school? In the community?**
  - Why did you choose to become involve in these activities?
  - In what ways have you gained from being involved in these activities?
  - In what ways do you think you have made a difference to the school/community through your involvement in these activities?

## **SCHOOL CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL COMMUNITIES: LEADERSHIP ISSUES**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 3: PARENT/COMMUNITY MEMBER**

1. **How would you describe your local community?**
  - What sort of changes have been happening in the community in the last five years? How have these changes affected the community? How have they affected you/your family?
  - When people want to get things done (e.g. get a new swimming pool, build a skateboard facility for youth), how do they go about it?
2. **Briefly describe the main characteristics of your school.**
  - How does this school compare with others you have been involved with?
3. **How have things changed in your school in the past couple of years?**
  - How and why did this change come about?
  - In what ways are parents and other community members involved in the school?
  - To what extent does parental/community involvement make a difference in your school?
  - Do you think this type/level of parental/community involvement is likely to continue?
  - Does parental/community involvement in the school have wider community implications?

#### *Specific questions about **your** school involvement*

- In what way(s) are **you** involved with the school?
  - Why did you choose to become involved in this way? Are you likely to continue your involvement?
  - What have been the outcomes of your involvement with the school?
  - Have there been any unexpected spinoffs/benefits from your involvement in the school?
  - How involved are **you** in other community activities?
  - Has your involvement in the school influenced you in your role in community activities?
  - Has your involvement in community activities influenced you in your role in the school?
4. **In what other ways does the school interact with the community?**
    - How are these links established and maintained?
    - What have been the outcomes of these links? Have there been any unexpected spinoffs from these links between school and community?
    - Are these links likely to continue?



## **SCHOOL CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL COMMUNITIES: LEADERSHIP ISSUES**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 4: ORGANISATION REPRESENTATIVE**

1. **How would you describe your local community?**
  - What sort of changes have been happening in the community in the last five years? How have these changes affected the community? Your organisation/group/business?
  - When people want to get things done (e.g. build a skateboard facility for youth, establish a community on-line access centre), how do they go about it?
2. **In general, what sort of relationship does/do the local school(s) have with the community?**
  - Has the relationship between school and community always been this way? If no, when did things start to change and why?
  - How have the changes that have been happening in the community over the past few years affected the school(s)? (e.g. change in enrolment numbers, curriculum changes)  
How has/have the school(s) responded to these changes?
3. **Briefly describe your organisation/group/business/role in the community.**
4. **Tell me about the links between your organisation/group/business and the local school.**
  - How are these links established and maintained?
  - What have been the outcomes of these links?
  - Are these links likely to continue?
  - Have there been any unexpected spinoffs from these partnerships with the community?
  - To what extent does your organisation/group/business and the school share physical resources and expertise?
  - What about sharing of resources between the school and other organisations/groups/businesses in the community?
5. **Does your organisation/group/business have links with other schools in the region?**
6. **Apart from your involvement with the school(s), how involved are you personally in the local community?**
  - How do you think your community involvement has influenced you personally?
  - How has it influenced you in your role within your organisation/group/business?
  - What about in your relationship with the local school(s)?
  - How do you think you have made a difference in this community?

## **Appendix D**

### **Participant information**

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- Information sheet
- Informed consent (Principals)
- Informed consent (others)
- Parental consent
- Further consent



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

## ***INFORMATION SHEET***

### **SCHOOL CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL COMMUNITIES**

Chief investigator: Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Associate Director,  
Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia,  
University of Tasmania

Researchers from the University of Tasmania are conducting a nationwide study into the nature and extent of the contribution of schools to their rural communities. The study will also investigate how the type of leadership within the school and community influences the school-community partnership. Funding for the project has been provided by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.

Five communities have been selected to participate in the study: Cooktown (Qld), Cowell (SA), Margaret River (WA), Meander (Tas) and Walla Walla (NSW). These communities have been selected from over 100 nominations from around Australia. They were selected to represent diversity in respect of population size and background, degree of isolation, school configuration, type of rural and other industry, and nature and stage of development of the school-community partnership.

Schools are often the major service present in many rural areas. In addition to providing education, schools provide significant opportunities for interaction within the community. However, the vital role that schools can and do play in community development is often overlooked. This study is important because it will investigate and document the contributions of rural schools to their community's development. It will also investigate how various factors, including school-community leadership, influence the effectiveness of the school-community partnership. The study will build on findings from a pilot study into the contribution of schools to their rural communities, which was conducted recently by this research team.

It is proposed to collect information from three main sources: (1) interviews with school staff, students, parents and wider community members; (2) observation, and (3) school and community documents. Both individual and group interview sessions will be conducted. All interviews will be face-to-face, and will be audio recorded with your permission, to be transcribed later. It is expected that individual interviews will take about 45 minutes, and group interviews about one hour.

Data will be analysed in conjunction with existing literature on school-community interaction. NUD\*IST qualitative data analysis software will provide computer-aided data analysis.

Recommendations from the study will include strategies for developing and maintaining effective school-community partnerships. These recommendations will assist policy makers when making decisions about the provision of education in rural communities, and about the implementation of community development programs. Policy recommendations will also feed into educational leadership and rural leadership courses.

#### *Results of investigation*

The initial findings from this study will be presented to each community via a community workshop. At these workshops, feedback on the findings will be sought from community members. This feedback will inform the final report.

#### *Confidentiality*

Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality of research data. Data obtained in interviews will be stored separately from details of the information sources.

#### *Anonymity*

Any identifying information will be removed from the data before presentation. Names of participants will not be used or linked with their respective contributions. The data will be used for research purposes only.

#### *Freedom to refuse or withdraw*

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. Participants may terminate their involvement at any time without prejudice.

#### *Contact person*

If you have any queries about this study please contact the Chief Investigator, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, at the University of Tasmania:  
phone (03) 6324 3018, fax (03) 6324 3040, or email [Sue.Kilpatrick@utas.edu.au](mailto:Sue.Kilpatrick@utas.edu.au)

#### *Concerns or complaints*

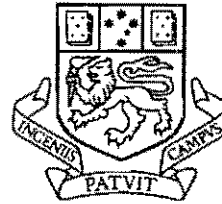
If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the manner in which the project is conducted, you may contact the Chair or Executive Officer of the University Ethics Committee (Human Experimentation):

Chair: Dr Margaret Otlowski phone (03) 6226 7569

Executive Officer: Ms Chris Hooper phone (03) 6226 2763

This project has received ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee (Human Experimentation), as well as from the appropriate State Government Departments of Education, and the appropriate State Catholic and other independent school education governing bodies.

You will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep.



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

## Statement of informed consent for Principals

### SCHOOL CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL COMMUNITIES: LEADERSHIP ISSUES

This study will enquire about the nature and importance of school contribution to the community, and how this contribution may be influenced by modes of school-community leadership.

I agree to participate in this research project and understand that:

1. The nature of my participation includes answering questions verbally that will be audio-recorded.
2. Other willing staff members and students from the school will also be interviewed either individually or in groups.
3. Students will not be interviewed unless a signed parental consent form for each participating student has been obtained.
4. The time required for each individual interview is about 45 minutes, and for focus groups one hour.
5. There is a possibility that this study could reveal differences amongst or between principal, teachers and students. If any discomfort should arise during the interview, participants will be invited to cease the activity.
6. My participation and the participation of my staff and students is entirely voluntary. I/they may terminate my/their involvement at any time without prejudice.
7. All data are confidential.
8. All data are for research purposes only.
9. If I have questions about the research or need to talk to the Chief Investigator during or after participation in the study I can contact the Chief Investigator, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Associate Director, Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, University of Tasmania on (03) 63243018.
10. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.
11. The nature and possible effects of this study have been answered to my satisfaction.
12. I agree that research data gathered may be published provided I/my staff cannot be identified as a subject.

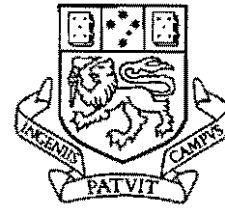
Name of participant:.....

Participant's signature:.....Date:.....

I have explained this project and the implications in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Name of interviewer:.....

Interviewer's signature:.....Date:.....



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

**Statement of informed consent for school staff, students and community members**

**SCHOOL CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL COMMUNITIES: LEADERSHIP ISSUES**

This study will enquire about the nature and importance of school contribution to the community, and how this contribution may be influenced by modes of school-community leadership.

I agree to participate in this research project and understand that:

1. The time required for the interview is about 45 minutes (individual interview) or one hour (group interview).
2. I will be required to answer questions verbally that will be audio-recorded. There is a possibility that this study could reveal differences amongst or between principal/other staff/students/ community members. If any discomfort should arise during the interview, I will be invited to cease the activity.
3. My participation is entirely voluntary. I may terminate my involvement at any time without prejudice.
4. All my data are for research purposes only.
5. If I have questions about the research or need to talk to the Chief Investigator during or after my participation in the study I can contact the Chief Investigator, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Associate Director, Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, University of Tasmania on (03) 63243018.
6. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.
7. The nature and possible effects of this study have been answered to my satisfaction.
8. I agree that research data gathered may be published provided I cannot be identified as a subject.

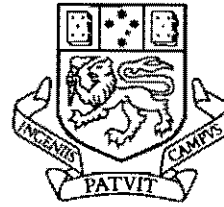
Name of participant:.....

Participant's signature:.....Date:.....

I have explained this project and the implications in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Name of interviewer:.....

Interviewer's signature:.....Date:.....



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

**REQUEST FOR PARENTAL APPROVAL TO INTERVIEW A STUDENT**

**SCHOOL CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL COMMUNITIES: LEADERSHIP ISSUES**

Attached in an information sheet about a study that researchers from the University of Tasmania are undertaking. This study will enquire about the nature and importance of your school's contribution to the community, and how this contribution may be influenced by modes of school-community leadership.

We plan to interview the Principal, some staff members, some parents and some students from your child's school. Your child has been selected by the Principal to participate in an interview with a small group of other students. Details are as follows:

1. The time required for the group interview will be about one hour.
2. Your child will be required to answer questions verbally that will be audio-recorded. There is a slight risk that this study could cause embarrassment amongst your child and other children. Every effort will be made to minimise this risk. If any discomfort should arise during the interview, your child will be invited to cease the activity.
3. Your child's participation is entirely voluntary. He/she may terminate his/her involvement at any time without prejudice.
4. All data collected are for research purposes only.

Before we can undertake this interview, we need to obtain your written approval for your child to participate. If you are prepared for your child to take part, would you please complete and sign the section below, and return it to school with your child as soon as possible. Please note that this project has received ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee (Human Experimentation), and from the appropriate Government and Non-Government educational governing body in each State.

**Parental approval for child's participation in the University of Tasmania study: "School contribution to rural communities: Leadership issues"**

I ..... (parent's full name) consent to my  
child ..... (child's full name) participating in the  
University of Tasmania study into 'School contribution to rural communities: Leadership issues'.

I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study. I understand that if I have questions about the research or need to talk to the Chief Investigator at any time before, during or after my child's participation in the study, I can contact the Chief Investigator, Dr Sue Kilpatrick, Associate Director, Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, University of Tasmania on (03) 6324 3018. I agree that research data gathered may be published provided my child cannot be identified as a subject.

Signature of  
parent: ..... Date: .....

## **School contribution to rural communities**

### **Further contact form**

Preliminary findings from this study will be presented at a community meeting during June or July 2001. The purpose of this meeting is to seek input from community members who participated in the interviews.

If you would like to receive advice regarding the date for the community meeting, please provide your expected contact details for 2001 below.

Name:.....

Address\*:.....

.....

Phone: ..... Fax: .....

Email:.....

*\*School students and staff please provide details of your expected school address for 2001.*



## **Appendix E**

### **Data analysis framework and definitions**

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Q.S.R. NUD.IST Power version, revision 4.0.  
Licensee: Faculty of Education.

PROJECT: School contribution project, User Susan Johns, 1:59 pm, May 16, 2003.

```
*****
(1) /Community
*** No Definition
*****
(1 1) /Community/Services
*** Definition:
Comments re provision of services/facilities. Also code as type (node 11)
*****
(1 2) /Community/Resources
*** Definition:
Community assets & liabilities; human, physical, financial resources
*****
(1 3) /Community/Issues
*** Definition:
Issues or concerns affecting the community
*****
(1 3 1) /Community/Issues/Environmental
*** Definition:
Natural environment, as well as general environmental conditions affecting
*****
(1 3 2) /Community/Issues/Youth
*** Definition:
e.g. drugs, homelessness, lack of engagement in community
*****
(1 3 3) /Community/Issues/Employment
*** Definition:
Code unemployment as employment (5 3) plus negative (node 11 6)
*****
(1 4) /Community/Conflict
*** Definition:
Role of conflict/division in community. Also code as positive/negative
*****
(1 5) /Community/Participation in
*** Definition:
Individual respondents' type and level of participation in community activities
*****
(1 6) /Community/Isolation
*** Definition:
Comments on effect of - also code with positive or negative as appropriate
*****
(2) /School
*** No Definition
*****
(2 1) /School/Resources
*** No Definition
*****
(2 1 1) /School/Resources/Human
*** No Definition
*****
(2 1 1 1) /School/Resources/Human/Staff
*** Definition:
Comments on staff, level/type of school or community involvement.
*****
(2 1 1 2) /School/Resources/Human/Parents
*** Definition:
Comments re involvement/contribution of parents to school/community.
*****
(2 1 1 3) /School/Resources/Human/Students
*** Definition:
Comments re student involvement in school and community, including decisionmaking
*****
```

```

(2 1 2)                /School/Resources/Physical
*** Definition:
Includes buildings, equipment, facilities
*****
(2 1 2 1)              /School/Resources/Physical/Facilities
*** Definition:
Venue, school buildings
*****
(2 1 2 2)              /School/Resources/Physical/Equipment
*** No Definition
*****
(2 1 2 3)              /School/Resources/Physical/Other
*** Definition:
e.g. school newsletter
*****
(2 1 3)                /School/Resources/Financial
*** Definition:
Financial resources of school' economic contributions made by school to community
*****
(2 2)                  /School/Organisation
*** Definition:
Major organisational issues, e.g. school closure, becoming senior high school
*****
(2 3)                  /School/Structure
*** Definition:
Power relationships (e.g. hierarchical or peer-based); parental involvement
*****
(2 4)                  /School/Culture
*** Definition:
Atmosphere; levels of trust, caring, respect, tolerance of difference
*****
(2 5)                  /School/Curriculum
*** Definition:
Include both content and delivery issues
*****
(2 6)                  /School/Vision
*** Definition:
Includes philosophy and goals of school
*****
(2 7)                  /School/Policy
*** Definition:
Agreed direction for school
*****
(2 8)                  /School/Attitudes towards
*** Definition:
Code as positive/negative (node 9) and as resources, curriculum etc as appropriate
*****
(2 9)                  /School/Size
*** Definition:
Perceptions of size
*****
(2 9 1)                /School/Size/Small
*** Definition:
With positive or negative
*****
(2 9 2)                /School/Size/Large
*** Definition:
With positive or negative
*****
(3)                    /Population
*** No Definition
*****
(3 1)                  /Population/Growth
*** Definition:
Code with 11 17, 11 18 or 11 19 to indicate type of growth
*****
(3 2)                  /Population/Nature
*** No Definition

```

```

*****
(3 2 1) /Population/Nature/Characteristics
*** No Definition
*****
(3 2 1 1) /Population/Nature/Characteristics/Homogeneous
*** Definition:
Very little diversity in background, attitudes; little new blood
*****
(3 2 1 2) /Population/Nature/Characteristics/Diverse
*** Definition:
Diversity of age, background, views, evidence of new blood
*****
(3 2 1 3) /Population/Nature/Characteristics/Conservative
*** Definition:
Not a risk-taker, careful, considered
*****
(3 2 1 4) /Population/Nature/Characteristics/Innovative
*** Definition:
Actively seeking new ideas, methods; participation in ed and training
*****
(3 2 2) /Population/Nature/Relationships
*** Definition:
e.g. close knit, friendly, distant, aloof; also code as positive or negative
*****
(3 2 3) /Population/Nature/Lifestyle
*** Definition:
e.g. values, attitudes, opportunities, effects of rurality; also +ve or -ve
*****
(3 2 4) /Population/Nature/Socioeconomic
*** Definition:
Comments re income, standard of living
*****
(3 3) /Population/Continuity
*** Definition:
People with past links, connections, knowledge - also code as positive or negative
*****
(4) /Change
*** Definition:
Always code with another node (e.g. node 1 community; node 11 type)
*****
(5) /School contributions
*** No Definition
*****
(5 1) /School contributions/Vehicles
*** No Definition
*****
(5 1 1) /School contributions/Vehicles/Curriculum based
*** No Definition
*****
(5 1 1 1) /School contributions/Vehicles/Curriculum based/VET in schools
*** No Definition
*****
(5 1 1 2) /School contributions/Vehicles/Curriculum based/Other programs
*** Definition:
e.g. cadets in schools, volunteer reading programs, work experience not VET in schools
*****
(5 1 2) /School contributions/Vehicles/Resource based
*** Definition:
Add type of resource (human, physical, financial) from node 2 1
*****
(5 1 3) /School contributions/Vehicles/Event based
*** Definition:
School involvement in annual/irregular events, e.g. Rock Eisteddfod, school fete
*****
(5 1 4) /School contributions/Vehicles/Enterprise based
*** Definition:
School run business activity, commercial and otherwise, e.g. school farm
*****

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(5 1 5)                /School contributions/Vehicles/Other
*** Definition:
e.g. reputation of school attracts people to community
*****
(6)                    /Relationships
*** Definition:
Also code at leadership (node 7) and networks (node 9 7) if appropriate
*****
(6 1)                  /Relationships/School
*** Definition:
Relationship with school as an institution
*****
(6 1 1)                /Relationships/School/Principal
*** Definition:
Also includes Vice principal or others in similar leadership role
*****
(6 1 2)                /Relationships/School/Teaching staff
*** No Definition
*****
(6 1 3)                /Relationships/School/Non teaching staff
*** No Definition
*****
(6 1 4)                /Relationships/School/Bodies
*** Definition:
Code to children of this node only
*****
(6 1 4 1)              /Relationships/School/Bodies/P & F
*** Definition:
P & C in some schools
*****
(6 1 4 2)              /Relationships/School/Bodies/School Council
*** Definition:
Board of Management, School Management Group etc.
*****
(6 1 4 3)              /Relationships/School/Bodies/SRC
*** Definition:
Student Representative Council or equivalent
*****
(6 1 4 4)              /Relationships/School/Bodies/Other
*** Definition:
Other school-based groups, e.g. school farm committee
*****
(6 2)                  /Relationships/Community
*** Definition:
Only use this for general reference to the community
*****
(6 2 1)                /Relationships/Community/Community individuals
*** No Definition
*****
(6 2 1 1)              /Relationships/Community/Community individuals/Parents
*** Definition:
Includes individual community members with children at school
*****
(6 2 1 2)              /Relationships/Community/Community individuals/Children
*** Definition:
Primary school age
*****
(6 2 1 3)              /Relationships/Community/Community individuals/Youth
*** Definition:
High school age - up to and including 18 years
*****
(6 2 1 4)              /Relationships/Community/Community individuals/Elderly
*** Definition:
Also includes disabled.
*****
(6 2 1 5)              /Relationships/Community/Community individuals/Unemployed
*** Definition:
Includes lower socioeconomic groups

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*****
(6 2 1 6)           /Relationships/Community/Community individuals/Other
*** Definition:
Includes individual community members without children at school
*****
(6 2 1 7)           /Relationships/Community/Community individuals/Indigenous
*** No Definition
*****
(6 2 2)             /Relationships/Community/Educational institutions
*** No Definition
*****
(6 2 2 1)           /Relationships/Community/Educational institutions/School
*** Definition:
Includes other schools; playgroups; separate kindergartens etc
*****
(6 2 2 2)           /Relationships/Community/Educational institutions/TAFE
*** No Definition
*****
(6 2 2 3)           /Relationships/Community/Educational institutions/Other
*** Definition:
Universities, Fisheries Academy, Association of Independent Schools
*****
(6 2 3)             /Relationships/Community/Employer
*** No Definition
*****
(6 2 3 1)           /Relationships/Community/Employer/Rural
*** No Definition
*****
(6 2 3 2)           /Relationships/Community/Employer/Non rural
*** No Definition
*****
(6 2 4)             /Relationships/Community/Industry representative
*** Definition:
Includes industry training boards, industry R & D groups etc - not individuals
*****
(6 2 4 1)           /Relationships/Community/Industry representative/Rural
*** Definition:
Represents industry on larger scale than local community
*****
(6 2 4 2)           /Relationships/Community/Industry representative/Non rural
*** Definition:
Represents industry on larger scale than local community
*****
(6 2 5)             /Relationships/Community/Government
*** No Definition
*****
(6 2 5 1)           /Relationships/Community/Government/Local
*** Definition:
Includes bodies associated with council, e.g. Youth Council in WA
*****
(6 2 5 2)           /Relationships/Community/Government/State
*** No Definition
*****
(6 2 5 3)           /Relationships/Community/Government/Federal
*** Definition:
Relationships with Govt Depts, Defence Force etc, for provision of funding
*****
(6 2 6)             /Relationships/Community/Community groups
*** Definition:
Also code as internal/external to community (node 11)
*****
(6 2 6 1)           /Relationships/Community/Community groups/Business Groups
*** Definition:
Local business groups e.g. Chamber Commerce, Bus Enterprise Centre
*****
(6 2 6 2)           /Relationships/Community/Community groups/Service
*** Definition:
Voluntary groups like Rotary, Lions, Country Fire Authority, St John Ambulance

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*****
(6 2 6 3)          /Relationships/Community/Community groups/Environmental
*** Definition:
e.g. Landcare, Coastcare etc.
*****
(6 2 6 4)          /Relationships/Community/Community groups/Sporting
*** No Definition
*****
(6 2 6 5)          /Relationships/Community/Community groups/Cultural
*** Definition:
e.g. Arts Council, Community Festival organisers
*****
(6 2 6 6)          /Relationships/Community/Community groups/Church
*** No Definition
*****
(6 2 6 7)          /Relationships/Community/Community groups/On-line access centre
*** No Definition
*****
(6 2 6 8)          /Relationships/Community/Community groups/Indigenous
*** Definition:
e.g. Aboriginal Land Councils, Corporations etc.
*****
(6 2 6 9)          /Relationships/Community/Community groups/Other
*** Definition:
Includes regional development orgs, police etc
*****
(6 2 6 10)         /Relationships/Community/Community groups/Health
*** Definition:
any health related organisations, e.g. hospital, aged care homes etc
*****
(6 2 6 11)         /Relationships/Community/Community groups/Media
*** Definition:
newspapers, radio stations etc
*****
(6 2 7)            /Relationships/Community/External consultants
*** Definition:
Not industry or educational - includes community development (e.g. Peter Kenyon)
*****
(7)                /Leadership
*** Definition:
Also code at relationships (node 5) wherever possible
*****
(7 1)              /Leadership/Leader Type
*** Definition:
Only code with a leadership activity
*****
(7 1 1)            /Leadership/Leader Type/Boundary crosser
*** Definition:
Individuals actively representing 2 or more different groups
*****
(7 1 2)            /Leadership/Leader Type/Opinion leader
*** Definition:
Individuals, often not formal leaders, who are early adopters of innovations
*****
(7 1 3)            /Leadership/Leader Type/Change agent
*** Definition:
Individuals or groups (e.g. the school) who bring about the change
*****
(7 1 3 1)          /Leadership/Leader Type/Change agent/Facilitator
*** Definition:
Someone who facilitates access to resources etc, such as Member of Parliament
*****
(7 1 4)            /Leadership/Leader Type/Formal
*** Definition:
Those in formal positions of leadership in school/community, e.g. principal
*****

```

(7 1 5) /Leadership/Leader Type/Group  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Leadership by formal committee, board of mgt etc;  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 1 6) /Leadership/Leader Type/Female  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Use where clear evidence of female individual or group leadership activities  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 1 7) /Leadership/Leader Type/Male  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Use where clear evidence of male individual or group leadership activities  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 2) /Leadership/Level of involvement  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Of individual/group players in leadership process; also code with who  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 2 1) /Leadership/Level of involvement/Increasing  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Greater numbers or greater diversity or greater level of involvement  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 2 2) /Leadership/Level of involvement/Stable  
 \*\*\* No Definition  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 2 3) /Leadership/Level of involvement/Decreasing  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Fewer numbers or less diversity or reduced level of involvement  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 2 4) /Leadership/Level of involvement/High  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Describes number of people involved or extent of involvement  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 2 5) /Leadership/Level of involvement/Low  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Describes number of people involved, or extent of involvement  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 3) /Leadership/Purpose  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Aims of the leadership process; what changes are intended?  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 3 1) /Leadership/Purpose/Capacity building  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Leadership focused on developing individual, school or community capacity  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 3 1 1) /Leadership/Purpose/Capacity building/Involvement  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Initiating/increasing involvement of all groups in activities; awareness  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 3 1 2) /Leadership/Purpose/Capacity building/Participation  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Initiating/enhancing participation of all groups in decisionmaking/leadership  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 3 1 3) /Leadership/Purpose/Capacity building/Relationships  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Building/increasing trust, tolerance of diversity etc  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 3 1 4) /Leadership/Purpose/Capacity building/Identity  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Maintaining/strengthening sense of identity of the group  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 3 2) /Leadership/Purpose/Tangible outcomes  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Leadership focused on an end product that will benefit the group  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(7 3 2 1) /Leadership/Purpose/Tangible outcomes/Facilities  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Improve services, facilities; includes fund raising (tourism)  
 \*\*\*\*\*



```

(7 3 2 2)          /Leadership/Purpose/Tangible outcomes/Resources
*** Definition:
e.g. improved skills base, retention of youth in community
*****
(7 4)              /Leadership/Processes
*** Definition:
Looks at the leadership process
*****
(7 4 1)            /Leadership/Processes/Activities
*** Definition:
Functions/activities undertaken in the leadership process; code at node 8
*****
(7 4 1 1)          /Leadership/Processes/Activities/Identify need
*** Definition:
Initial vision arising from identified need
*****
(7 4 1 2)          /Leadership/Processes/Activities/Support base
*** Definition:
Build initial support base, e.g. discuss idea with those directly involved
*****
(7 4 1 3)          /Leadership/Processes/Activities/Build alliance
*** No Definition
*****
(7 4 1 3 1)        /Leadership/Processes/Activities/Build alliance/Widen support
base
*** Definition:
e.g. hold community meeting; seek input/opinions from all groups
*****
(7 4 1 3 2)        /Leadership/Processes/Activities/Build alliance/Create
conditions
*** Definition:
Develop culture/structures reflecting mutual respect, trust, acceptance
*****
(7 4 1 3 3)        /Leadership/Processes/Activities/Build alliance/Identify
resources
*** Definition:
Identify and access resources; e.g. write submission, seek departmental advice
*****
(7 4 1 4)          /Leadership/Processes/Activities/Develop shared vision
*** Definition:
Involve others in developing and articulating shared vision
*****
(7 4 1 5)          /Leadership/Processes/Activities/Action plan
*** No Definition
*****
(7 4 1 5 1)        /Leadership/Processes/Activities/Action plan/Identify leaders
*** Definition:
Identify/approach potential leaders, e.g. set up a committee
*****
(7 4 1 5 2)        /Leadership/Processes/Activities/Action plan/Motivate others
*** Definition:
Motivate (empower) others to take leadership role (e.g. build self confidence)
*****
(7 4 1 5 3)        /Leadership/Processes/Activities/Action plan/Publicity
*** Definition:
Encourage widespread support for action through which vision is to be realised
*****
(7 4 1 6)          /Leadership/Processes/Activities/Implement action
*** No Definition
*****
(7 4 1 7)          /Leadership/Processes/Activities/Review
*** Definition:
Review/renew vision and goals; celebrate successes
*****
(7 4 2)            /Leadership/Processes/Stages
*** No Definition
*****

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```

(7 4 2 1)                /Leadership/Processes/Stages/Initiation
*** Definition:
Initiation and planning of change, up to and including implementation
*****
(7 4 2 2)                /Leadership/Processes/Stages/Maintenance
*** Definition:
Period following initial implementation
*****
(7 4 2 3)                /Leadership/Processes/Stages/Development
*** Definition:
Spin offs from implementation of change, e.g. effects of publicity received
*****
(7 5)                    /Leadership/Comments
*** Definition:
General leadership comments; also code as positive or negative
*****
(8)                      /Outcomes
*** Definition:
Of school contributions, of leadership process etc.
*****
(8 1)                    /Outcomes/Who
*** Definition:
Also code with a child from node 4 2 2 (nature)
*****
(8 1 1)                  /Outcomes/Who/Youth
*** Definition:
Outcomes specifically relating to youth/young people
*****
(8 1 2)                  /Outcomes/Who/Community
*** Definition:
Outcomes for all community members, not specifically for youth
*****
(8 1 2 1)                /Outcomes/Who/Community/Business and industry groups
*** No Definition
*****
(8 1 2 2)                /Outcomes/Who/Community/Other groups
*** Definition:
e.g. sporting groups etc.
*****
(8 1 2 3)                /Outcomes/Who/Community/General community
*** No Definition
*****
(8 1 3)                  /Outcomes/Who/School
*** Definition:
School-related outcomes not necessarily directly benefiting the wider community
*****
(8 1 4)                  /Outcomes/Who/Other individuals
*** Definition:
e.g. business people, the elderly - specific people rather than the 'community'
*****
(8 2)                    /Outcomes/Nature
*** No Definition
*****
(8 2 1)                  /Outcomes/Nature/Self-confidence
*** Definition:
Self-esteem, self-efficacy, sense of identity, self discovery
*****
(8 2 2)                  /Outcomes/Nature/Awareness
*** No Definition
*****
(8 2 2 1)                /Outcomes/Nature/Awareness/Work
*** Definition:
Attitudes not skills (appreciation of work ethic, job readiness)
*****
(8 2 2 2)                /Outcomes/Nature/Awareness/Community
*** Definition:
Knowledge of way community operates, awareness of community needs
*****

```

(8 2 2 3) /Outcomes/Nature/Awareness/School  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Increased awareness of: school activities, benefits of school contributions  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 3) /Outcomes/Nature/Social needs  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Meets need to belong, feel valued, contribute, interact, intergenerational trust  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 4) /Outcomes/Nature/Educational  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Specific & generic skills & knowledge leading to personal development, study  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 5) /Outcomes/Nature/Economic  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Gain employment or facilities; provision of skilled labour  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 5 1) /Outcomes/Nature/Economic/Employment related  
 \*\*\* No Definition  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 5 1 1) /Outcomes/Nature/Economic/Employment related/Part time  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Part time or casual employment, including self employment  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 5 1 2) /Outcomes/Nature/Economic/Employment related/Full time  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Full time employment or self employment  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 5 1 3) /Outcomes/Nature/Economic/Employment related/Pathways  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Employment pathways, e.g. traineeships  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 5 1 4) /Outcomes/Nature/Economic/Employment related/Skills base  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Pool of skilled human resources available to employers  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 5 2) /Outcomes/Nature/Economic/Other  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Non-employment outcomes; includes facilities, income, new industry  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 6) /Outcomes/Nature/Retention  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Retention in, or return of youth or others to community or school  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 7) /Outcomes/Nature/Attitudinal change  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Individual changes in attitude or motivation (e.g. break down barriers)  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 8) /Outcomes/Nature/Environmental  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Activities resulting in, or designed to, preserve natural environment  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 9) /Outcomes/Nature/Health  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Outcomes related to physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of community  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(8 2 10) /Outcomes/Nature/Untapped resources  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Skills and knowledge shared by community members, that are not usually accessed  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(9) /Social capital  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Can be both a process (e.g. leadership) and a community outcome  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(9 1) /Social capital/Shared vision  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Evidence of common goals, purposes; also codes with node 1 and/or 2 as appropriate  
 \*\*\*\*\*

9 2) /Social capital/Shared values  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Includes attitudinal change, e.g. acceptance of diversity.  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(9 3) /Social capital/Trust  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Faith, belief in, based on past experiences; mutual respect, equality  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(9 4) /Social capital/Identity  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Way in which school/community perceive themselves  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(9 5) /Social capital/Sharing  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Willingness to share knowledge and skills in community  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(9 5 1) /Social capital/Sharing/Expertise  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Sharing skills, knowledge  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(9 5 2) /Social capital/Sharing/Physical resources  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 e.g. money, materials and equipment  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(9 6) /Social capital/Willingness to participate  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Willingness to act for good of community without expecting personal reward  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(9 7) /Social capital/Networks  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Share information through two-way ongoing relationships; also internal or external  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(9 8) /Social capital/Cohesion  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Evidence of social cohesion; close knit nature of school or community  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(10) /Influencing factors  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Factors which influence contributions, outcomes or leadership; also code +ve or -ve  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(10 1) /Influencing factors/Factors  
 \*\*\* No Definition  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(10 1 1) /Influencing factors/Factors/Environment  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Political, social, economic factors e.g. in rural industry; include timing  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(10 1 2) /Influencing factors/Factors/Systemic  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Organisational factors: rules, regulations, policies (eg CAP, ASSPA)  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(10 1 3) /Influencing factors/Factors/Resources  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Funding, time, personnel, technology; continuity of resources  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(10 1 3 1) /Influencing factors/Factors/Resources/Funding  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Availability or continuity of funding  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(10 1 3 2) /Influencing factors/Factors/Resources/Human resources  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Availability or continuity of personnel  
 \*\*\*\*\*

(10 1 3 3) /Influencing factors/Factors/Resources/Other  
 \*\*\* Definition:  
 Includes time, availability of equipment and facilities, etc.  
 \*\*\*\*\*

```

(10 1 4)                /Influencing factors/Factors/Key players
*** Definition:
Actions/characteristics of individuals. Also code with type new (11 12)
*****
(10 1 5)                /Influencing factors/Factors/Communication
*** Definition:
Two-way channel of communication; includes conflict resolution processes
*****
(10 1 6)                /Influencing factors/Factors/Capacity
*** Definition:
Receptiveness to change; willingness and ability to form partnerships
*****
(10 1 7)                /Influencing factors/Factors/Conflict
*** Definition:
Role of conflict; also code as positive or negative (node 9)
*****
(10 1 8)                /Influencing factors/Factors/Publicity and information
*** Definition:
Awareness of benefits/outcomes/other models; effects of 'being in spotlight'
*****
(10 1 9)                /Influencing factors/Factors/Standards
*** Definition:
Well publicised expectations to which others are encouraged to aspire
*****
(10 1 10)               /Influencing factors/Factors/School characteristics
*** Definition:
Also code at 2 1 to 2 7 as appropriate.
*****
(10 1 11)               /Influencing factors/Factors/Community links
*** Definition:
Extent or strength of internal or external community links
*****
(10 2)                  /Influencing factors/Hindsight
*** Definition:
Factors that interviewees believe should be given more attention in the future
*****
(11)                    /Type
*** Definition:
Must always be coded with another node(s) (e.g. internal change=node 4)
*****
(11 1)                  /Type/Formal
*** No Definition
*****
(11 2)                  /Type/Informal
*** No Definition
*****
(11 3)                  /Type/Internal
*** No Definition
*****
(11 4)                  /Type/External
*** Definition:
External to community
*****
(11 5)                  /Type/Positive
*** No Definition
*****
(11 6)                  /Type/Negative
*** No Definition
*****
(11 7)                  /Type/Planned
*** Definition:
Outcomes or processes that were expected and planned for
*****
(11 8)                  /Type/Unplanned
*** Definition:
Unexpected outcomes or processes - spinoffs not intended in original plan
*****

```

```

(11 9)                /Type/Past
*** Definition:
Former or previous examples, cases or factors
*****
(11 10)               /Type/Present
*** Definition:
Current or actual examples, cases, factors, outcomes
*****
(11 11)               /Type/Future
*** Definition:
Long-term or intended outcomes, developments, initiatives; not yet realised
*****
(11 12)               /Type/New
*** No Definition
*****
(11 13)               /Type/Established
*** No Definition
*****
(11 14)               /Type/Young
*** Definition:
Refers to children and youth
*****
(11 15)               /Type/Middle aged
*** Definition:
Refers to adults up to retiring age
*****
(11 16)               /Type/Elderly
*** Definition:
Adults past retirement age
*****
(11 17)               /Type/Decreasing
*** Definition:
Refers to employment, population etc
*****
(11 18)               /Type/Stable
*** Definition:
Refers to employment, population etc
*****
(11 19)               /Type/Increasing
*** Definition:
Refers to employment, population etc
*****
(12)                  /Case data
*** No Definition
*****
(12 1)                /Case data/Site
*** No Definition
*****
(12 1 1)              /Case data/Site/Location
*** No Definition
*****
(12 1 1 1)            /Case data/Site/Location/Margaret River
*** No Definition
*****
(12 1 1 2)            /Case data/Site/Location/Meander
*** No Definition
*****
(12 1 1 3)            /Case data/Site/Location/Walla Walla
*** No Definition
*****
(12 1 1 4)            /Case data/Site/Location/Cooktown
*** No Definition
*****
(12 1 1 5)            /Case data/Site/Location/Cowell
*** No Definition
*****
(12 1 2)              /Case data/Site/Type
*** No Definition

```

```

*****
(12 1 2 1)          /Case data/Site/Type/Main location
*** No Definition
*****
(12 1 2 2)          /Case data/Site/Type/Other location
*** Definition:
Towns/communities other than the five targeted for study
*****
(12 2)              /Case data/Interviewee type
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 1)            /Case data/Interviewee type/School staff
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 1 1)          /Case data/Interviewee type/School staff/Principal
*** Definition:
Also includes Vice Principal
*****
(12 2 1 2)          /Case data/Interviewee type/School staff/Teacher
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 1 3)          /Case data/Interviewee type/School staff/Non teaching staff
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 2)            /Case data/Interviewee type/Youth
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 2 1)          /Case data/Interviewee type/Youth/At school
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 2 2)          /Case data/Interviewee type/Youth/School leaver
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 3)            /Case data/Interviewee type/Parent
*** Definition:
Also includes individual community members (not representing organisation)
*****
(12 2 3 1)          /Case data/Interviewee type/Parent/Informal involvement
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 3 2)          /Case data/Interviewee type/Parent/Formal involvement
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 3 3)          /Case data/Interviewee type/Parent/Informal & formal involvement
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4)            /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4 1)          /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Business
*** Definition:
Individual businesses not organisations representing businesses
*****
(12 2 4 2)          /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Rural industry
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4 3)          /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Other industry
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4 4)          /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Government
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4 4 1)        /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Government/Local
*** Definition:
local shire council
*****

```

```

(12 2 4 4 2)          /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Government/State
*** Definition:
Reps of State Govt departments
*****
(12 2 4 4 3)          /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Government/Federal
*** Definition:
Reps of Federal Govt Departments
*****
(12 2 4 5)            /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Business enterprise
centre
*** Definition:
Also includes Chamber of Commerce/regional development organisation
*****
(12 2 4 6)            /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Church
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4 7)            /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Service club
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4 8)            /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Sport group
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4 9)            /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Environmental group
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4 10)           /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Online access centre
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4 11)           /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Health group
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4 12)           /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Other educational
*** Definition:
TAFE, University
*****
(12 2 4 13)           /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Media
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4 14)           /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Indigenous group
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4 15)           /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Other group
*** No Definition
*****
(12 2 4 15 1)         /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Other group/Internal
*** Definition:
Group/organisation located within community
*****
(12 2 4 15 2)         /Case data/Interviewee type/Community group/Other group/External
*** Definition:
Group/organisation located outside community
*****
(12 3)                /Case data/Gender
*** No Definition
*****
(12 3 1)              /Case data/Gender/Female
*** No Definition
*****
(12 3 2)              /Case data/Gender/Male
*** No Definition
*****
(12 4)                /Case data/Indigenous
*** Definition:
Only code if interviewee is known to be of Indigenous background
*****
(12 5)                /Case data/Years in community
*** No Definition
*****

```



```

(12 5 1)          /Case data/Years in community/<3 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 5 2)          /Case data/Years in community/3-10 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 5 3)          /Case data/Years in community/>10 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 5 4)          /Case data/Years in community/Don't live in community
*** No Definition
*****
(12 6)            /Case data/Years at school
*** Definition:
Total no of years involved with that particular school, as teacher, parent
*****
(12 6 1)          /Case data/Years at school/<3 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 6 2)          /Case data/Years at school/3-10 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 6 3)          /Case data/Years at school/>10 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 6 4)          /Case data/Years at school/No school involvement
*** No Definition
*****
(12 7)            /Case data/Other school involvement
*** No Definition
*****
(12 7 1)          /Case data/Other school involvement/School type
*** No Definition
*****
(12 7 1 1)        /Case data/Other school involvement/School type/Rural
*** No Definition
*****
(12 7 1 1 1)      /Case data/Other school involvement/School type/Rural/Years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 7 1 1 1 1)    /Case data/Other school involvement/School type/Rural/Years/<3
years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 7 1 1 1 2)    /Case data/Other school involvement/School type/Rural/Years/3-10
years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 7 1 1 1 3)    /Case data/Other school involvement/School type/Rural/Years/>10
years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 7 1 1 1 4)    /Case data/Other school involvement/School type/Rural/Years/No
school involvement
*** No Definition
*****
(12 7 1 2)        /Case data/Other school involvement/School type/Metropolitan
*** No Definition
*****
(12 7 1 2 1)      /Case data/Other school involvement/School
type/Metropolitan/Years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 7 1 2 1 1)    /Case data/Other school involvement/School
type/Metropolitan/Years/<3 years
*** No Definition
*****

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```

(12 7 1 2 1 2)      /Case data/Other school involvement/School
type/Metropolitan/Years/3-10 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 7 1 2 1 3)      /Case data/Other school involvement/School
type/Metropolitan/Years/>10 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 7 1 2 1 4)      /Case data/Other school involvement/School
type/Metropolitan/Years/No school involvement
*** No Definition
*****
(12 8)               /Case data/Age
*** No Definition
*****
(12 8 1)             /Case data/Age/under 13 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 8 2)             /Case data/Age/13-20 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 8 3)             /Case data/Age/21-30 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 8 4)             /Case data/Age/31-40 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 8 5)             /Case data/Age/41-50 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 8 6)             /Case data/Age/51-60 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 8 7)             /Case data/Age/over 60 years
*** No Definition
*****
(12 9)               /Case data/Type of community
*** Definition:
Refers mainly to population characteristics, i.e. type, number etc
*****
(12 9 1)             /Case data/Type of community/Homogenous
*** No Definition
*****
(12 9 2)             /Case data/Type of community/Diverse
*** No Definition
*****
(12 9 3)             /Case data/Type of community/Declining
*** No Definition
*****
(12 9 4)             /Case data/Type of community/Stable
*** No Definition
*****
(12 9 5)             /Case data/Type of community/Growing
*** No Definition
*****
(12 10)              /Case data/Type of school
*** No Definition
*****
(12 10 1)            /Case data/Type of school/Main school
*** No Definition
*****
(12 10 2)            /Case data/Type of school/Other school
*** No Definition
*****

```

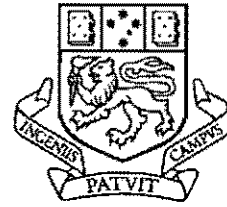
## **Appendix F**

### **Community meetings<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to acknowledge the assistance of my colleague, Libby Prescott, in note taking during community meetings and preparing the following summaries of issues and recommendations.



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia

31 May 2001

## ***INVITATION***

Dear

You are invited to participate in a community meeting at which we will present findings from our study into *School contribution to rural communities: Leadership issues*.

This will be a good opportunity for you to have some input into framing recommendations that will help schools and communities develop better partnerships.

**Date:** Friday 22 June 2001  
**Time:** 4.00-5.30pm  
**Place:** Freycinet Inn

*Light refreshments will be served  
after the meeting*

Regards

Susan Johns and Libby Prescott

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**RSVP:** For catering purposes, it would be appreciated if you would advise of your intention to attend the meeting. Please complete and return this slip to the Margaret River Senior High School office by **Friday 15 June**.

I ..... will be attending *the School contribution to rural communities* meeting at the Freycinet Inn on Friday 22 June 2001.

## SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMUNITY MEETINGS

### MEANDER PRIMARY SCHOOL 29/5/01

1. **Community needs school as much as school needs community:** School is centre for cultural identity for rural areas: To Govt/Ed Dept – need to be aware that there is a need to keep the school to keep the community. Larger centralised schools may seem to be cost effective on the face of it, but this causes all sorts of other social problems for students. The costs of overcoming these problems may outweigh financially, and certainly outweigh socially, the other savings. The extra community input from rural communities may also counter financial advantages from centralisation.
2. **Involving teachers in community:** Difficulties for school leadership fitting in to rural community: Need constructive community support to help staff overcome problems. A broad-based school council could take this role. There can be a problem with new teachers and those who commute to a school not becoming part of the community and not being aware of community resources. Schools need to hold an induction for all new teachers (incl principal) showing them the assets and resources of the area so that they feel a part of the community. Negative community perceptions can be overcome by community members getting to know the staff in person. Community needs to have feeling that staff are part of community.
3. **Publicity:** Need to celebrate successes of school and publicise these.
4. **Community ownership a pride in school:** School needs to be flexible and open to ideas from the broader community. Needs to reach out and give students and community a “world view” (cf trips to Parliament House for students).
5. **Roles of School Council & P&F:** Has been a resurgence in role of P&F as schools always need extra money.
6. **School/community funding priorities:** Hard times (financially or otherwise) can be a positive catalyst for community involvement...motivate the community.

## COOKTOWN AREA SCHOOL 18/6/01

1. **Need for financial continuity:** to sustain projects funding needs to be ongoing beyond seeding grants. A 3 year sunset clause for government funded projects is out of kilter with businesses which work on 5 year plans and no business expects to make a profit for at least the first 5 years. It is difficult for projects to become self-sustaining in small rural communities with few non-government resources. If a program is successful and is deemed to be so by whatever criteria are set, it should be financially sustained by external government funding: eg a VET program should be evaluated and the decision made as to whether it is continued or not.
2. **How to measure outcomes?** DETYA data used for evaluation needs to be both qualitative and quantitative. Going on raw numbers doesn't give a full picture of success or otherwise. The definition of 'outcomes' in this context needs to be broad: eg In some cases the 'graduation rate' is an inappropriate measure where just getting young people to come to school a couple of days a week may be a positive outcome in some communities. Key outcomes may not be just numeric but social in community gain. *(Perhaps there is a need to revise the actual aims of VET and how to measure these- is it simply to get young people employed or is it more than this? If more, how can these qualitative outcomes be measured?)*
3. **Government & Departmental policy:** this needs to be flexible and willing to give ideas a try, though there is little point in trialing something without the money to sustain the program if it is successful. In trying to fit guidelines good original ideas may be lost. Forced 'innovations' may occur when these changes may not be necessary. Staff are expected to make submissions for funding in their spare time. There is a tendency to lose sight of what the real aim/purpose of a school should be. Should staff be finding resourcing or implementing programs? Teachers are taken away from their core job. There is a need to employ someone to develop grant applications. *(Should this be the VET coordinators job? Or possibly train the admin staff or bursar? If so should there be training/professional development for this? Do ECEF allow for the cost of making applications in the funding? Should there be just one pot of money for rural schools rather than a lot of little time-consuming pots all requiring different applications?)*
4. **Bending the rules:** schools need to be innovative with their resourcing eg ASSPA funding is shared by all kids, not just indigenous kids so that they are 'working together and sharing resources'. This avoided positive discrimination policies causing division in the community. Most schools bend the rules anyway, to fit their specific needs. This is a waste of time and a huge risk for a project if assessors want to play by the rules. There needs to be greater flexibility in the policy itself to allow for regional variations/needs so that communities, schools and government agents aren't forced to do so. Each community needs to have its uniqueness recognised and assessed on an individual basis. Guidelines are too rigid and inflexible. *(The whole issue of writing policy needs to be considered. Perhaps rural schools need to be given greater flexibility in accreditation.)*
5. **Intellectual property rights:** Schools should have intellectual property rights over ideas or programs established and get financial credit and recognition for this if other schools capitalise on the idea. This could go some way toward sustaining such schemes. There is a need for recognition and reward within education departments for schools developing innovative ideas.

6. **Rural communities:** better outcomes are achieved if rural communities take the initiative and responsibility for these. There is a need to cultivate mutual awareness between school and community.
7. **Getting an idea underway:** This can only be achieved with community backing. Government, school and community need to be involved from the start. eg With *Step Ahead*, community members give continuity when school staffing changes. Schools and communities need to realise that parent bodies and the community can achieve far more than school staff in changing policy and in getting bureaucracy to listen. School Councils are an obvious forum but these need to be more active in getting ideas out into the community.
8. **Parental involvement:** schools need to actively integrate parents, particularly those not normally involved. This is best achieved by personal contact, going out to them in places where they are comfortable rather than expecting them to come to the school. Like good hunters, schools need to “go where they’re drinking”. Need to make schools more accessible to people, break down barriers eg instead of a meeting have a barbeque or other social event.
9. **Staff continuity:** this is particularly important for Indigenous students and the female support is especially so for Indigenous girls. The role of the teacher aide is important here. Ancillary staff are a vital link between school and community, tending to be long term local residents and less threatening to community members with bad school experiences or little education.

1. **Valuing and retaining youth in the community:** Youth can be retained by providing all levels of education locally. Every rural community needs to be able to provide education up to tertiary level to keep ownership of their youth. This means a greater role for rural schools by providing for partnerships with all levels. Clustering of various levels may facilitate this process. Education must be seen as an essential service, not an economically rationalised service. If youth choose to study elsewhere, schools and community need to develop a program for preparing students and their families for coping with life while undertaking tertiary studies in the city- re accommodation, financial survival, 'hormones' and study. Federal Govt Youth allowance rules discriminate against rural youth.
2. **Shared vision needs to be community driven:** Devolution of decision making to local education level through govt policy is essential. It empowers local involvement and allows for shared vision. Local management of services encourages non-school employees and students to be involved in decision making. Schools need greater autonomy over key decisions.
3. **Valuing and using skills of community members esp. retirees in school:** Create a skills database (directory of available human resources) for the school re parents and community members. This can be a two-way street in relationships, building confidence and focusing on expertise and skills people are willing to share. This can be key in untapped skills as school resources using people with time, patience and life skills who are increasingly retiring in or to rural areas. Gives retirees a purpose and a greater understanding of youth. Need regular programs for this like the LAP reading program at MRSB. Publicise 'local heroes' by recognising, promoting and using talents of people in the community. *(More important for larger schools where community is not always aware of people's skills.. School's role as mediator of talents needs to go further and make use of the skills...bring parents in for curriculum planning?...possible role for subcommittee of P&C or employ a school/comm liaison person-boundary crosser- to coordinate.)*
4. **Building school/community liaison...an open school in an open community:** Putting up a school sign saying "We invite you..." or "Visitors welcome and encouraged..." *(School design/ refurbishment; parents/community need to work with architects-as part of their brief- and dept to get location and design of schools right.)* Recommend further joint use of school community facilities. This will lead to mutual respect eg through school art/theatre/sport productions involving the community as well as career education.
5. **Self sufficiency in developing community leaders:** by accelerating devolution of school decision making to the local community to address the needs of all stakeholders in the education system.
6. **Promote parental involvement and participation through a pro-active school:** Have parent year group representatives to broaden parental involvement, liaise with other parents/teachers and welcome newcomers. Target specific people in community and ask them directly to take part in a particular project. The school needs to take the initiative primarily through good leadership. A joint staff/community "getting to know you" function at the start of the year followed up later in the year. "It takes a village to raise a child"- requires cooperative responsibility eg truancy- parents don't necessarily know but others could ask students why they are not at school.



7. **Pivotal role of school principal/ retention of staff in rural areas:** supported by good morale among staff and suitable accommodation for these in country towns. Need financial incentives to get staff to go to and stay in rural areas. A school/ comm. liaison person could also help with housing and making new teachers feel welcome. A 'new staff' function for staff from all schools, state and private, in the community would also help. This could be held at a different school throughout the year or moved away from the school and initiated/organised by community groups. The principal needs to create practical opportunities for boundary crossers in terms of finances and time- to free them up if they are school employees.
8. **How to measure outcomes of school/comm. programs:** this needs to change to take into account longer term, non-economic and non-quantitative outcomes. eg Retiree working with youth in reading program said that developing his reading skills was the least important outcome of the program. Can actively pursue and measure success by subsequent long term participation.
9. **Publicity for school programs:** schools need to build active and planned promotion into programs. This publicity needs to be ongoing...it's easy for new ideas to get publicity but harder for ongoing projects.
10. **Government & Departmental policy:** the community actively subverts and manipulates the relevant government systems and education management hierarchy to suit its own purpose. Schools need to get the community onside to get action. The community going to government achieves more than the school ever would on its own. Increase in power of parents via school councils and P&F is relevant here.

## COWELL AREA SCHOOL 25/6/01

1. **Lack of continuity of funding:** Funding should be reviewed after a set period and before the end of the project to justify continuity of the program. Schools need to have a long term overview and to identify specific outcomes required of the project and seek funding for all aspects of each project (eg for capital works AND staffing) as one is inadequate without the other. Difficulty is for schools to find people with skills to apply for funding.
2. **Maintain a good relationship with oyster growers to maintain VET program:** the school needs to keep the aquaculture committee going, with a broad range of community members represented and targeted, including a local govt rep and community members with specific skills. Liaison needs to be expanded to include other educational bodies or industry groups, eg Flinders University as a research establishment. School needs to build itself up as a resource for industry so the reliance is mutual and beneficial to both the school and growers.
3. **Retaining staff in rural areas:** Department needs to encourage rural students to train as teachers so there is a greater chance of their returning to that community. (*eg. rural scholarships, publicity of advantages of working in rural schools, young graduates to talk at rural schools and career expos, target year 11-12 students and education students, incorporate rural education module and pracs in teacher training courses, greater support for professional development for rural teachers, ed students go to uni for 2 years then do supply teaching at rural schools while finishing degree online etc*). Short term contracts for teachers need to be abolished for rural schools in SA. Area schools staffed the same as R-12 schools for SSO (auxiliary) staff but their requirements are greater.
4. **Disruptive effect of students coming from outside the community with different (inappropriate) values:** Encourage or facilitate a way that incoming students can build or be involved in a community project that they can take pride in and so absorb community values. Get young people involved in the community through sports or part-time work-the school may be able to help facilitate this. Governing council or SRC could organise casual get together early in the year to allow new students (esp secondary) to meet classmates and make friends. Possibly establish a mentoring program for retired people and youth. A school/comm liaison person could set this up?
5. **Barrier for parents/community members coming into school:** Particularly a problem with the lack of time due to work etc. Government can change the content of education to allow for greater flexibility in timetabling (staff work shifts to keep the school open later for senior students and adults with jobs who wish to undertake further studies). School councils could establish a skills register to get parents/comm members with something to offer into school. Personal approach would work best rather than a mail out as this creates an obligation to become involved. Government and community could jointly fund a **school/community liaison person** to build relationships between these groups. This person would link various groups and not be seen as representing just one.

1. **Increasing government awareness of the 'rurality' issue: what is a rural school?** Education departments, DETYA etc need to have a particular department/area of focus to target and serve rural schools as there is a lack of understanding of specific local rural issues eg school bus access problems, living away from home allowance etc. In defining a rural school, the drawing area as well as its location should be considered.
2. **Rural school/community peak body:** this needs to be developed to take issues to government and network for the general benefit of rural schools and their communities.
3. **School/community liaison person:** This position could be developed in conjunction with Local Govt to liaise between all schools in a LG area and groups in the community. Regional Solutions funding/local govt and schools etc could combine to fund this position.
4. **Church linking school and community:** need formal links to be established for value building: social welfare, crisis intervention, pastoral care, communication facilitation between school/church/community, building self esteem.
5. **Students in community aid work:** Students can be directly involved in community aid work eg meals on wheels etc with benefits for intergenerational trust. (*Insurance issues?*)
6. **Boarding School bond with parents:** good relationships are built between parents of boarders and other boarding students helping to make parents feel welcome in the school. This strong relationship forms a strong foundation for work with the rest of the community.
7. **Private schools and the community:** It is perhaps even more important for private schools to interact with the local community to gain community acceptance and support as there may be resentment of them as 'institutions for the wealthy'. Having staff live locally and take part in local activities is very important in establishing that relationship...again there is a problem with staff living outside the local community (Albury).

**Appendix G**  
**Case studies**

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# Cooktown: Pushing the boundaries<sup>1</sup>

This is a case study of a Vocational Education and Training (VET)-in-schools program as a vehicle for a school's contribution to its community. In particular it is a story of a remote school and community prepared to push the boundaries, and think 'outside the box' in order to develop creative solutions to their particular community needs. Cooktown and the surrounding region is not the sort of community to take things 'lying down'. When the Sydney Olympic Games torch relay bypassed the town, they held their own torch relay under the banner of NOCOG (Not the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games) as a fundraiser for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. When faced with high youth unemployment and low school retention rates, school and community developed their own VET-in-schools program. From the beginning they made it clear that the program would be developed and run on their own terms to meet their own particular needs. It meant pushing policy boundaries that precluded funding to Years 9 and 10 VET-in-schools programs; pushing traditional education boundaries such as the 9.00am to 3.00pm school day, the school precinct and existing curricula; challenging educational practices such as employing only trained educators as VET coordinators; and challenging established local business practices of providing employment opportunities only to young people whose families were 'known' in the community.

## The site

This case study centres on the most remote and isolated of the five study sites, Cooktown, in Far North Queensland. However, with the gradual sealing of the road between Cairns and Cooktown, and the increase in communication infrastructure, the sense of physical and psychological isolation is gradually decreasing. With its population of 1411 people at the 1996 Census (ABS 1998) and now estimated at 1800 (Hans Lucer, pers. comm. 25 September 2001), Cooktown is a service centre for the nearby Indigenous community of Hope Vale (population 777 (ABS 1998)), as well as for the surrounding pastoral properties, and for the smaller communities of Rossville, Laura and Lakeland, and the Wujal Wujal Indigenous community. For the purposes of this study, the Cooktown community is deemed to include all of these communities, representing a total estimated population of 3147 (Hans Lucer, pers. comm. 25 September 2001). Of these communities, Cooktown has a close relationship with Hope Vale, mainly because of its proximity to Cooktown and because Hope Vale State School (for primary children) is the main feeder school outside Cooktown to the Secondary Department of Cooktown State School.

Cooktown is the seat of the local Cook Shire Council, which services the entire Cape York region, excluding Weipa. A community member described it as a 'continually changing community ... [and] centre for a number of government agencies'. Following Shire Council bankruptcy, local government had been under a period of administration for some forty years until 1989, when Shire Council elections were again held and a Chairman (later known as Mayor) and councillors elected. One third of the Shire's total population of 6880 is identified as Indigenous (ABS 1998), and there appears to be a relatively good relationship between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, especially between the school and the Indigenous community. As one member of the Indigenous community told us, 'Cooktown

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<sup>1</sup>This case study was written by Susan Johns, Bill Mulford and Ian Falk and appeared as Chapter 4 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) who funded this research. The final report, *More than an Education: Leadership for rural school-community partnerships*, was published in 2002. Co-authors Professor Bill Mulford from the University of Tasmania and Professor Ian Falk from the Northern Territory University attest to the authorship of the case study as follows: Susan Johns (85%), Bill Mulford (10%) and Ian Falk (5%).

school has done a lot for the Indigenous people, Indigenous kids, and I'm pretty proud of Cooktown School ... they go out of their way to help us'.

A number of respondents identified problems in the community with the following being representative: 'There are a lot of problems in Cooktown with alcohol, drug abuse, which all lead to domestic violence and stuff'. Despite such problems there was also a common view that 'it's a community that's coming out of a very depressed state'.

The region supports a number of industries, including rural industry (large cattle and grain holdings, as well as smaller horticultural concerns), mining at a nearby silica mine, and an increasing tourism industry. Unemployment in the region at the 1996 Census was 8.4% (ABS 1998). In an effort to remedy unemployment and to develop a training culture within the region, several community initiatives have been developed in recent years, including a VET-in-schools program introduced in 1997 and extended later to include school-based apprenticeships, and a local workforce development partnership program introduced in 1998 to raise the profile of education and training and to improve and create employment and training opportunities within the community. At the time of writing this case study, plans are underway for the development of a community-run skills training centre within Cooktown, which will be responsible for identifying and providing relevant training opportunities throughout the region.

## **The school**

There is one school in Cooktown, the Cooktown State School and Secondary Department, which caters for 420 students from Pre-school to Year 12. Originally a primary school only, in 1986 a separate secondary campus for students up to Year 10 was established, then in the early 1990s the secondary campus extended its offerings to Years 11 and 12 students. In 1998, the two campuses were amalgamated into a single campus in new purpose-built accommodation several blocks from the town centre. Approximately 25 to 30 per cent of the students are Indigenous, with a larger percentage in the Secondary Department.

A feature of the Cooktown State School is the way it actively fosters partnerships with the community. The school is involved in collaborative community development initiatives funded through a variety of State Government and Federal Government programs such as Priority Country Area Program (PCAP) and Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness (ASSPA). For example, Cooktown State School has developed links with schools in the five smaller communities in the region. As the Cook cluster, these schools have combined their funding from various sources, including PCAP, ASSPA and the schools' Parents and Citizens (P & C) organisations, and have developed and run a number of workshops and other programs for the benefit of students, parents and the wider community. In May 2000, Cooktown State School was the venue for the Rural Futures Conference, hosted by the Department of Primary Industries Queensland, and PCAP, which attracted a number of intrastate and interstate delegates. The Conference was preceded by the inaugural student leadership forum, convened by Cooktown State School, for high school student leaders from throughout Far North Queensland. A key outcome of each of these activities was the fostering of greater cooperation between the different communities and their schools. The PCAP program, in particular, which is run by a committee of community and school representatives, is described as having played a major role in facilitating interaction and building trust between schools and their communities, and also in fostering greater cooperation between community groups within Cooktown itself. As one respondent explains, 'the main [outcome of PCAP] is ... the networks that are formed'.

The school has received particular recognition in recent years for its *Step Ahead* program. *Step Ahead* is an alternative, community-based VET-in-schools program for students at risk of not completing secondary school. It is needs driven and therefore culturally inclusive,

although of the 22 students enrolled in the program in 2000, from Years 9 to 11, the majority were Indigenous males. It offers Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 1 training to students, with competencies being recorded in student log books. Training areas reflect the industry base of the region, and include rural skills, building and construction, engineering (pre-vocational), basic office skills, and hospitality. The program comprises one week's work placement, and three weeks of school, every month. The school component consists of a modified curriculum which 'is delivered in a multi-age class situation focusing on numeracy, literacy and life skills' (*Step Ahead: A Cooktown community initiative* booklet, p. 17). Students also select a number of electives from the mainstream curriculum. It is this program and its outcomes for youth, the community, and the region, that forms the basis of the case study presented here.

### **Step Ahead: A community initiative**

The establishment of *Step Ahead* can best be described under three phases: initiation, maintenance and progression.

#### **Initiation**

The seed for the *Step Ahead* program was sown in 1996 during discussions between two Cooktown State School teachers; one a teacher of manual arts and the other a learning support teacher. One was concerned with promoting vocational options more within the school; the other with implementing a program to cater for children whose needs were not being met by the mainstream curriculum and whose attendance was irregular. Not only did these two teachers have differing views of the needs but they were also often involved in what could be termed 'constructive conflict'. As one school staff member put it:

I think our success came from the fact that [one of them] was at one end of the spectrum [as an educator] and [the other one] was at the other [as a hands-on, let's go and do it person] ... [they] argued and bitched and carried on ...

The Principal of the time assisted and supported these two enthusiastic, but conceptually different teachers, to develop a solution to their concerns by acting as a sounding board and by seeking information from relevant key people external to the community, including a representative from Education Queensland. The tentative solution derived by the two teachers was to devise a VET-in-schools program that would cater for students at risk. Utilising their own relatively extensive community networks, and acting on their advice to us that if you want to get things done in the Cooktown community you 'do it yourself', the two teachers set out on a course of action that not only sought advice and information from, but also increasingly involved, the community. Again, the Principal assisted and supported them by utilising his own extensive community networks. The following school staff member explains why it was so important to involve the community from an early stage:

... have an understanding that there are a lot of people in the community who have an interest in what the school is doing and ... to cultivate that interest ... the school really needs to be able to build the links between ... the councils and the different interest groups ... so that you've got a network of contacts ... and then really working with those different groups to find out how you can best provide for the students as well as look at what happens outside of school ...

From the early 1990s in Cooktown, there had been a gradual increase in the extent of school-community linkages, in part due to the PCAP program, through which school and community were encouraged to work together to develop and implement initiatives to benefit students and the wider community. These existing linkages provided a solid foundation on which to build *Step Ahead*.

Following discussions with a senior consultant from Education Queensland, details regarding a proposed VET program were developed. Because of the huge amount of work involved in

sourcing funding and setting up a program of this kind, funding was sought and obtained to allow both teachers to reduce their teaching loads by half, for a six-month period. During this time they coordinated submissions for funding, organised meetings and began to build a community support base, all the while maintaining a bridging link between school and community.

The next step was to approach prominent community members to participate in a 'think tank' regarding the viability of a school VET program and to gauge public support for such an initiative. The key was personal communication. A former school staff member involved in the initiation of *Step Ahead* recalls:

R: ... that's when we sort of targeted various key players like after that many years in a small community and I knew everybody and I could tap people on the shoulder and get them involved and they felt obligated to do so. So ...

I: So it was a lot of personal sort of communication?

R: Very personal, very much yeah, and I worked really closely with the mayor and the councillors and I was on a lot of various committees you know and as things happen in small communities when you need something you need to just go around and make a phone call, visit people and you know they jump on board and they feel well they have to because you know if they don't nobody else will. And ... the Cooktown people are extremely vigorous and passionate about their town, extremely so and I've never seen anything like it.

Several key community opinion leaders were actively involved in shaping the vision of the VET program, including a representative from the mining industry, who proposed to include students from Years 9 and 10 in the program. It was considered that traditional VET programs, which began at Year 11, were too late as many students had already dropped out of school by this stage. The proposed initiative received overwhelming support from school and community members. It was then presented to the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation<sup>2</sup> (ASTF), the key funding body. ASTF funding and support was to be a major factor in the initiation and maintenance of *Step Ahead*, as it provided a salary for the specialist classroom teacher employed to deliver a modified curriculum to students. The Principal and initiating teachers worked closely with key individuals from ASTF, and from the Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) and Education Queensland, who also would provide support. ASTF policy at the time precluded funding for VET-in-schools programs for Year 9 and Year 10 students, however, because of the level of school and community commitment to the initiative, and the foresight of the funding body, the initiative went ahead:

... the lady [from ASTF] ... said well this doesn't really quite fit the guidelines precisely, but it's such a valuable initiative we need to keep it going ... So a lot of support was provided by [ASTF], they were just brilliant ... fortunately they had people who could think outside the square and you know support us and allow us to take the risks and the risks paid off.

Subsequently, ASTF policy was changed to provide funding for VET-in-schools programs in Years 9 and 10. A school staff member involved in the initiation of *Step Ahead* explains:

I: ... you said that the funding from ASTF was going to be a problem ... how did you resolve, was it something that the committee worked on to get around?

R: No, they changed the policy.

I: So it was very timely was it?

R: No actually, we were the catalysts ... now they've changed their policies to fund projects from Year 9 on.

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<sup>2</sup> Now known as the Enterprise & Career Education Foundation (ECEF).



The next step in developing the program was to formalise the school–community partnership by the formation of a Management Committee, comprising school staff and targeted community members, who represented the various community sectors that were stakeholders in the program. Many of these committee members also were present at the original community ‘think tank’, and included representatives from the local council, the construction, mining, pastoral and hospitality industries, Indigenous groups, as well as parents. A representative of the hospitality/tourism industry, with extensive links within the business and local government sectors of Cooktown, was approached by the Principal to act as chairperson of the newly formed Management Committee. A good deal of the initial and ongoing success of the *Step Ahead* program has been attributed to the Management Committee who were ‘a very very powerful group of quite energetic and creative people’. In particular, the strong support of key players from the Indigenous communities in Cooktown and nearby Hope Vale, as well as a key player from the silica mining industry, was noted as important to the successful setting up and operation of the *Step Ahead* program.

The formation and early actions of the Management Committee were significant for several reasons. The Management Committee:

- reflected the community-based nature of the program;
- developed the program as a business, by developing a business plan, an induction program for participating workplaces, assessment and quality assurance processes, and by publicising the program through brochures and presentations at conferences and seminars;
- provided a strong ‘customer’ focus by facilitating ‘on-going liaison between stakeholders and clients to obtain relevant feedback for guiding the development of the program’ (*Step Ahead: A Cooktown community initiative* booklet, p. 12), and
- brought ‘a sense of direction and a networking structure to the project’ (*Step Ahead: A Cooktown community initiative* booklet, p. 10).

The role of Management Committee members at this stage was to involve themselves in decision making regarding policy development, and to canvas other employers within their industry to offer work placements to students. To reinforce community ownership of the program, a conscious decision was made by the Management Committee to hold committee meetings and other functions related to the program at venues in the community, rather than at the school. In addition, it was considered important to hold meetings regularly and on time, to send out minutes and reminders of meetings, and to follow up non-attendance of Committee members. This businesslike approach from the program’s inception helped to give *Step Ahead* credibility within the community, as one of the teachers involved in initiating the program recalls:

- I: So initially what was the purpose of these meetings? You were having them regularly, what were you hoping to achieve?
- R: We wanted the whole program to be seen as a partnership between the community and the school ... we wanted it to be an integral part of the substance of it, the development of it and so on, and people tended to take that on board, they tended to work with us.

Nor were those involved with the initiative above a little ‘bribery’, at least at the beginning. The same staff member recalls:

Initially we also bought a light lunch for everyone to get them to come along, but they did. And later on we just dispensed with the light lunches, it got too expensive, and everyone kept on coming.

The care and time taken with the screening and selection of employers and students was seen as a key feature contributing to the success of the program. As the VET Coordinator stressed:

... it took us 12 months before we even looked at a student in the school ... We made sure we did our ground work, our homework with the employers ...

For over six months in the lead-up to the first intake of students, potential employers were carefully selected by Management Committee members according to their suitability and commitment to the aims of the program, and according to their involvement in actual or potential employment areas. One committee member explains:

I suppose we looked at how long they'd been in business in Cooktown, looked at how well we knew them personally as well as ... in the social way ... we really knew the people's background, we knew that if they made a commitment we were happy that the commitment would be fulfilled ...

For students:

Inclusion in the program was conditional upon:

1. Interview with a guidance officer.
2. Evaluation of academic progress.
3. Signing of a contract outlining minimum expectations.
4. Parental interview and written consent (*Step Ahead: A Cooktown community initiative* booklet, p. 13).

As the following *Step Ahead* school staff point out, for students to enter the program there had to be a need and they also had to believe it was a privilege to belong:

They can't just go into *Step Ahead* because they want to. There has to be the need and the need normally is that their literacy, numeracy is very low and quite often their self-confidence and self-esteem is also very low.

We thought it might look like a dummy's course, and we didn't want it to be that way ... when we selected the students ... we said to them well if you don't come to school, or you don't go to your job, you're sacked ... And, of course, they ... tried us out, some of them got sacked ... they went back to normal classes ... We tried to promote it as a privilege to be there.

In January 1997, the first cohort of students began the *Step Ahead* program.

## Maintenance

Following the implementation of *Step Ahead*, the role of some of the key players in the program changed. The Principal's active involvement in the program reduced; whilst he still provided support for the program, his role in the day-to-day running decreased. The Management Committee's role changed from one of initiating, to one of monitoring and refining the program. The Committee maintains ongoing links and regular communication between employers, the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community, and the school. It continues to meet once a month at the RSL in town, and is actively involved in decision making regarding student work placements and other issues affecting the program. It also advises on current industry trends and training needs.

In order to ensure the continuation of *Step Ahead*, and in recognition of the large amount of administration and coordination required to maintain such a program, the position of *Step Ahead* and School-based Apprenticeship Coordinator was created. The chairperson of the Management Committee was an invited applicant. She had lived in the community for a number of years and, prior to her appointment, was a small business operator. The following extracts describe the 'risk' taken by the school by appointing someone without teaching qualifications, and the reasons for making this decision in terms of potential benefits for both school and community. The first extract is from a community member and the second from a school staff member:

One of the risks the school took was taking somebody who doesn't have an education background to tackle an issue like this ... she doesn't know that if you're teaching, don't

go and get the kids out and take them to the plane at 6 o'clock in the morning ... *Step Ahead* ... needed someone who could bridge the gap between the school and an employer ... that position could have been given to a teacher, or someone out of their own system and I don't think it would ever have had half its success ...

[The *Step Ahead* Coordinator] is the type of person who has a lot of energy, she's very community minded and can see out to the peripherals to see how if we do this then that will affect that and may acquire an advantage to the town in a number of other different ways. She's definitely a person who knows how to work through the bureaucracy of government and government departments ... she has a very broad network ... she's the type of person that really helps initiate and get things going.

The *Step Ahead* Coordinator used her broad networks in business and local government to facilitate communication between the school and community. As she noted:

If there is a problem that problem is coped with very early and it doesn't get time to fester or to really grow out of all proportion.

This same person did much to strengthen the relationship between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities; in particular, she worked hard at establishing a close relationship with the Indigenous Hope Vale Council, which has proved important in ensuring the *Step Ahead* program is well supported in that community.

The following comment from a student is typical of the level of support of past and present *Step Ahead* students for the Coordinator:

She always checks up on us, always makes sure we're up to date on our subjects and stuff, and she's always happy to help us in any way, [even] if we're in trouble ... she's always willing to be there for us.

Also important for the program's success was using a primary rather than secondary school approach by having one teacher responsible for and teaching the *Step Ahead* students rather than a range of subject teachers. As one of the students in the program told us:

... one classroom teacher is good ... the teacher gets to know us well and [I] wasn't so ashamed ... if you have a problem with maths ... she was willing to help us.

A number of respondents commented on the high level of commitment of stakeholders in the program. This commitment extends well beyond what might normally be expected. Speaking of the *Step Ahead* Coordinator, the following community member explains:

The reason that *Step Ahead* has succeeded and is not just because it's somebody's job ... [it's] people's personal interest in addressing those imbalances or doing something for those that are obviously missing out or dropping out or being passed by the way, so [the *Step Ahead* Coordinator] is employed by the school ... but if it was just 9 to 3 well the program wouldn't have achieved what it has achieved ...

Continued high levels of commitment are demonstrated by the employers participating in *Step Ahead*, as the VET Coordinator notes:

... I'm happy to say that the commitment is still there with the same people that we started with four years ago.

Although the Management Committee would normally cover expenses relating to work placements, respondents noted the amount of financial support provided by employers, in terms of providing students on work placement with meals, accommodation and transport as required. In addition, the commitment of Management Committee members in terms of time and financial contributions was seen also as an important factor in the program's success. The VET Coordinator explains:

We've kept it a really good close committee because they all give two hours of their time one morning every month which says a lot for a small community when there is travel involved ... you've got the guys fly down from [the silica mine] for that meeting and the other people come in from various [places].

A former school staff member involved in initiating *Step Ahead* noted that this continued commitment of stakeholders to the program is influenced strongly by the program's positive outcomes for youth:

... and the kids we have, I think we're very lucky ... they turned out to be really good, excellent kids. And they impressed all the employers, and to a degree that everyone wanted to be part of it ... so I think that's what kept it going actually, more than anything we did, I think it was the kids, because they showed so much interest, and they changed so dramatically ...

## Progression

Following on from the success of the *Step Ahead* program, the Cooktown State School has developed a school-based apprenticeship program in recent years. In 2000, there were 12 senior students undertaking school-based apprenticeships; some of these were from *Step Ahead*, with the majority from the mainstream educational program. Three quarters of these school-based apprentices were employed in the silica mining industry. The *Step Ahead* Management Committee also assumes responsibility for school-based apprenticeships.

The successful implementation of the *Step Ahead* program has been the catalyst for other community initiatives in terms of education and training, including a planned community-run skills training centre in Cooktown. The skills centre planning committee comprises community and school representatives, including the Principal and *Step Ahead* Coordinator. Negotiations are currently underway regarding sharing of school facilities and infrastructure with the proposed skills centre.

The *Step Ahead* program is subject to regular review by the Management Committee. Most community groups and industry sectors now participate in *Step Ahead*, and new opportunities in tourism and ecotourism are being sought. However, it was noted that the links between the school and the public health sector appear to be underdeveloped due to a variety of factors, including issues of confidentiality which prevents the health sector from offering its services as a host employer in the *Step Ahead* program. Issues to be addressed in the future include further developments that will benefit youth in the wider Cape York region, the need to attract and retain female students to the program and to have work placements for them beyond the supermarket and child care, and the need to resolve timetabling and sustainability issues (*Step Ahead: A Cooktown community initiative* booklet, p. 22).

Timetabling issues include disruptions associated with *Step Ahead* students regularly missing elective classes which are offered as part of the mainstream school timetable, while on work placement. Sustainability issues relate mainly to the need for ongoing and increased levels of funding, following the initial three-year seeding grant. In 1999, it was noted that:

Current community support exceeds the school's capacity to accommodate all identified students in the program. The school in consultation with the community needs to encourage Education Queensland to increase its support so that the dimensions of the program can be expand [sic]' (*Step Ahead: A Cooktown community initiative* booklet, p. 23).

Respondents interviewed in 2000 indicated the level of community support for the program was still high, and noted some progress with regard to funding issues. They referred in particular to Education Queensland's inclusion of funding for the position of a *Step Ahead* classroom teacher in the school's ongoing staffing profile, and noted the importance of this increased financial support to the future of *Step Ahead*.

## How does *Step Ahead* contribute to the community?

The data indicate that there are multiple beneficiaries of the *Step Ahead* program: the youth who participate, the school, individual community members and groups, and the region. As a result of participating in the program, there has been an observed increase in the self-esteem and self-worth of youth, in positive behaviour, and in school retention levels. Some have gone on to participate in school-based apprenticeships, and for others, there is a real chance of obtaining work within the region once they have left school. More importantly, those young people who have completed the *Step Ahead* program have gained a sense of their place in and value to the community, and have become positive role models to other young people. As a number of Indigenous respondents note:

[One *Step Ahead* student] won the CD for attendance, that was the first thing he told me, within two minutes of meeting him. And that was from missing school all the time to having the best attendance ... it's another kettle of fish, you know he's there all the time when you need him.

... it's been good for both non-Indigenous as well as Indigenous kids ... it's good that the students themselves know too that there are people in the community that care for them.

My young fella, he's really slow at picking up, and he's joined the *Step Ahead* program, and he loves it and he's always encouraging the other kids now, always says don't miss school or they'll kick you out of *Step Ahead* ... so he's really encouraging the other kids to attend school ...

On a broader level, community capacity has increased as school and community members work together to provide opportunities for their youth. The development of the *Step Ahead* program has provided a mechanism for people with similar values and beliefs to work together to bring about change in the community, as the following Shire Council representative explains:

It's [*Step Ahead*] certainly a catalyst ... it brought [together] as a committee, a group of people with similar interests and ideas and ambitions, I suppose, and that gave that base then to look at other [community initiatives] ... the conversation will lead itself to different opportunities and ideas and options ...

Trust between individuals and between different groups (youth and adults, Indigenous and non-Indigenous) has grown through involvement in the *Step Ahead* program. Two Indigenous respondents comment:

Lots of aboriginal people just don't [support their kids] ... But through *Step Ahead* there's been family support ... it's amazing when Christmas comes around when we can see that parents come, even younger brothers and sisters, that come to the speech night ... it's brought the people out of the woodwork.

... to see black and white mingle together that night [at the annual presentation night for *Step Ahead* students] was a hair raising thing.

The program has given the community a greater sense of control over its own and its children's futures, and has fostered an increasing awareness of the need for education and training. This Indigenous respondent explains:

I think that with RATEP [Remote Area Teacher Education Program] and that *Step Ahead* and there's more people getting more jobs yeah, there's more people in you know good positions and working for the community ... to see different people you know, different aboriginal people and in different areas of where they've got control over things and it makes me proud.

Participation in *Step Ahead* is stimulating a greater awareness of the need for individuals within industry groups to work together. A rural industry representative describes the benefits of participation in *Step Ahead* in the following way:

... from the properties' point of view and from the industry's perspective point of view it's the benefit that you are going to get long term, on bringing that kid along in that right direction. That you may not get the full benefits out of it but your industry is going to. And I think more people have got to look in that direction ...

The *Step Ahead* program has received widespread publicity because of its positive impact on the community. For example, a video and booklet about the program were produced by Education Queensland, and distributed widely throughout Queensland. A school staff member describes how this publicity has increased school and community identity and pride, and has engendered a sense of collective self-efficacy:

Oh the enormous personal and professional pride for being associated with it, the fact that it was recognised by a national organisation like ASTF, gave enormous sort of kudos to the people involved and ... they felt good about themselves. So self-esteem of everybody increased, it was a winner and everybody ... wants to be part of the winning team ...

## **Discussion**

### **Nature and extent of the school's contribution to the community**

Cooktown State School plays an important leadership role in the community. Through the expertise, enthusiasm and commitment of its Principal and staff, their access to extensive external networks of information and support, and determination to work with their community, the school has contributed much to the region in terms of increasing community capacity. It has gone some way towards addressing youth issues such as high unemployment, low school retention rates, and low self-esteem; it has done much to build trust and strengthen relationships between the different community groups; it has provided a mechanism for community dialogue and action, and it has increased community awareness of the need for increased levels of formal education and training, and the benefits of working collectively in order to ensure the sustainability of the region. School staff involved in *Step Ahead* expressed some concerns, however, at the relatively narrow range of criteria used by funding bodies to evaluate the program's effectiveness, which did not take into account the multiple outcomes for youth and the community noted above.

Although *Step Ahead* was a school initiative it soon grew to become a community vision reflecting a partnership between the school and a community of committed and passionate individuals. There have been several new developments in the community as a result of *Step Ahead*, including a school-based apprenticeship program and a local workforce development partnership. Underpinning the partnership is a group of school and community leaders who facilitate thinking outside the box, risk taking and relationship building, and a leadership process intent on finding community solutions to community problems.

### **Leadership issues: Key players and their roles**

That the initial proposal for *Step Ahead* came from two teachers at the school illustrates a key feature of the Principal's leadership role—of developing people and facilitating them to follow through with their ideas. This transformational leadership style provided the impetus for the school and community to risk take and push boundaries in the development of a program which would address community concerns regarding youth.

The courage to take this first step came, in part, from the thorough knowledge that the Principal and teachers had of their community—its strengths and weaknesses, its needs and aspirations—and from demonstrated community support for such an initiative. The program draws heavily on existing community assets, namely the people and their willingness to

participate for the good of the community's youth. A significant feature of *Step Ahead* was the decision by the Principal and initiating teachers to involve the community from the beginning, to encourage their support for, and ownership of, *Step Ahead*. This demonstrates the importance placed by school leaders on broad-based involvement in leadership. However, some concern was expressed by a small number of teachers not directly involved in *Step Ahead*, that more could have been done to build a support base for the initiative within the school. These teachers, who felt excluded from the process, described feelings of resentment at the amount of publicity and resources being received by staff who were involved in *Step Ahead*.

The Principal and initiating teachers built an initial community support base, by using their existing contacts with key community members. These key community members formed the nucleus of the *Step Ahead* Management Committee that took control and ownership of and, most importantly, responsibility for the program. The Management Committee was pivotal to the maintenance, and continues to be pivotal to the progression, of *Step Ahead*. It is a key link between school and community, and is a good example of school and community leaders developing a shared vision and working collaboratively for the benefit of the community. By distributing leadership, all stakeholders have been given an equal voice in the initiation, maintenance and progression of *Step Ahead*. The conscious decision of the Committee to hold Management Committee meetings in the community rather than the school, and to adopt business principles in the management of the program, increased the credibility and sense of community ownership of *Step Ahead*, and helped to maintain commitment by all stakeholders to the program.

The key to success in developing the partnership between school and community is to be found in the relationship-building activities of key players. In this case, the school chose to appoint a business person who was a community leader with extensive overlapping networks outside of the school, rather than a trained educator, to the position of *Step Ahead* Coordinator. This illustrates the school leadership ethos of risk taking and pushing the boundaries. The data clearly indicate that the benefits of such an appointment have more than justified the risk, in terms of the effectiveness of the Coordinator's relationship-building activities, especially in relation to Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups.

The *Step Ahead* Coordinator's role is essentially one of creating and maintaining links between school, and current and prospective host employers. In so doing the Coordinator can be described as a 'boundary crosser' who used her credibility within community sectors to build trust and promote dialogue between different groups. As well as wide-ranging internal links within Cooktown, the *Step Ahead* Coordinator also demonstrated the use of extensive external networks in the development and management of the program. The appointment of such a person to the position of *Step Ahead* Coordinator has been significant to the maintenance, and will continue to be significant to the sustainability, of the program. Although this particular person is no longer *Step Ahead* Coordinator and has stepped down as chairperson of the *Step Ahead* Management Committee, she is still a member of the Management Committee. She continues to provide important links with the past, because of her involvement in the initiation and maintenance of the program, and with the future, because of her involvement in a number of community planning groups including the community skills training centre planning committee.

## **Other influencing factors**

### *Within the school and community*

The high level of commitment of stakeholders to the program is a key theme running across the three phases of *Step Ahead*. Each of the stakeholders demonstrates that they view their role in the program in terms of a shared community vision for the future of their youth, rather than as just a 'job'. Each is willing to invest large amounts of time, energy and/or financial

resources to make this vision a reality. However, commitment is not something that just happened; it took many months of careful planning and discussion to build trust between the stakeholders and commitment to the program. Leadership strategies employed by school leaders to build commitment included: wide-ranging and ongoing stakeholder consultation (facilitated through Management Committee meetings, the liaison role of the *Step Ahead* Coordinator, and informal communication); careful selection and monitoring of students and host employers, and publicity and celebration of successful outcomes. The effectiveness of these strategies is illustrated by the fact that the initial high level of commitment of stakeholders is still evident today. This would seem to augur well for the sustainability of *Step Ahead*.

#### *Outside the control of the school and community*

Whilst *Step Ahead* would not have developed in the way it did without visionary school and community leadership, the high level of commitment of stakeholders, and careful research and planning, several factors outside the control of the school and community influenced the program's initiation, maintenance and progression.

On a positive note, the timing of *Step Ahead* was a critical factor, in terms of the availability of external funding and support to initiate VET-in-schools programs, which were beginning to 'take off' from the mid-1990s. Although funding continues to be an issue for the maintenance and progression of the program, it is less critical now than in the initiation and maintenance stages. The decision by Education Queensland to include funding for the *Step Ahead* classroom teacher position in the ongoing staffing profile of the school has done much to reduce resourcing concerns. The funding of several other Federal Government and State Government initiatives also has been timely. Of particular importance were PCAP funding (particularly from 1991 onwards when changed administrative arrangements introduced in Queensland gave considerably more autonomy to communities and their schools to decide how funding would be allocated), and the more recently-introduced ASSPA program. These programs were complementary to the VET-in-schools initiative, as the focus of each was on building and strengthening school-community partnerships.

The other issue regarding the importance of the timing of *Step Ahead* relates to the stage of development of the community itself. The timing of the program, with its emphasis on self-sufficiency and community ownership and responsibility, could not have been better. Emerging from a period of local government under administration, the community had come to understand the importance of, and realise some measures of success in, controlling its own destiny. Additionally, in Hope Vale the closure of the mission was forcing that community to make decisions for itself. The program also coincided with the Indigenous communities rediscovering and taking pride in their own cultural values and stories.

Publicity, particularly related to the attention the program has received from those outside of Cooktown, is an important factor which has positively influenced the maintenance and further progression of *Step Ahead*. Of particular importance was the video and booklet produced by Education Queensland.

A factor which could have negatively influenced the implementation of *Step Ahead* included education system and other government policies at the time. The response of school leaders in Cooktown was to challenge government policy and practice that did not offer sufficient flexibility to allow them to fully develop *Step Ahead* as a community vision. Such policies included those in relation to funding guidelines for VET-in-schools programs, and the length of the school day. The school found innovative ways to reconcile policy and practice and, in one case, was a catalyst for one national funding body's change of policy. The data clearly indicate that involving and working with education and other government bodies from an early stage, ensured that the school has enjoyed both initial and ongoing support for *Step Ahead*.



## For the future

The process of planning and implementing collaborative workshops funded by bodies such as PCAP, ASSPA and school P & C groups, and in particular the process of planning and implementing *Step Ahead*, has been valuable in terms of the community development process. The lessons learnt, the mechanisms developed for group dialogue and action, and the results of what can be achieved when school and community work together, have been catalysts for other community initiatives. They have also provided lessons for other rural communities. However, there is still much to be achieved, as the region deals with the effects of decreasing isolation, increasing opportunities in tourism and related areas, and the need to provide employment opportunities for its increasing population. One area for future development includes the need to investigate the way in which closer links might be forged between the education and public health sectors in Cooktown, in order to make better use of the extensive human, physical and financial resources of each. As Education and Health form by far the largest proportion of government expenditure it might be that there is a need for a 'whole-of-government' approach to this issue. In this and other areas it seems very likely that the school and its leadership will continue to play an active role in the region's development, by continuing to foster existing partnerships and by forging new partnerships.

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# Cowell: A close-knit community opens its eyes<sup>3</sup>

The rural scene in Australia over recent years has featured too many stories of community decline—of third and fourth generation farming families being forced to sell up; of disillusioned rural youth moving away to the city; of small communities withering in size and spirit, as they face a future of uncertainty. With its harsh climatic conditions, economic uncertainty in terms of its fat lamb, cereal and grain production, and lack of opportunities for youth, Cowell could have become another 'casualty' within the rural landscape. Fortunately, it didn't. This case study tells the story of how Cowell 'reinvented' itself by building on its natural assets: its pristine harbour; its generations of knowledge, skills and experience in rural industry, and the strength and determination of its people. By diversifying its industry base to embrace aquaculture in the early 1990s, and by subsequently developing its potential as both a tourism and retirement centre, Cowell today is in a period of economic growth and its outlook for the future seems promising. Change, however, did not come about easily or quickly in this conservative and culturally homogeneous rural community. The case study documents how Cowell gradually 'opened its eyes' to the need to be more outward looking, in terms of seeking new opportunities and ideas from outside the community. It places the school as one of the central players in this process.

## The site

The town of Cowell, with its relatively stable population of 748 (ABS 1997), is situated on the east coast of the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia. It forms part of the Franklin Harbour Local Government Area, which has a total population of 1241 (ABS 2001). For the purposes of this study, the Cowell community is represented by the Franklin Harbour Local Government Area. Cowell is 107 km from Whyalla (population 23 650 (ABS 1998)) to the north, and 168 km from Port Lincoln (population 13 305 (ABS 1998)) to the south. Regionally Cowell forms a cluster with Cleve (population 1899 (ABS 1998)) 43 km west and Kimba (population 1249 (ABS 1998)) 86 km north-west, for educational, local government, sporting and health purposes.

Cereal, grains and fat lamb production are the main agricultural activities. Cowell is in a high risk area for drought, and can count on an average of only about one or two good years in five. Many smaller farms have been taken over by larger enterprises. Locals suggest that this harsh environment leads to very conservative attitudes in that people won't try anything new unless they're sure it will work. Many people we spoke to described the community as 'close knit' and supportive. Of the five study sites, Cowell has the greatest percentage of Australian born residents (92 per cent) and the least number of speakers of a language other than English, reflecting the cultural homogeneity of the population.

In the last 10 years the fishing and prawning fleets have moved to Port Lincoln but have been replaced by a booming aquaculture industry, based mainly on oyster growing but also

<sup>3</sup> This case study was written by Susan Johns and Libby Prescott and appeared as Chapter 5 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) who funded this research. The final report, *More than an Education: Leadership for rural school-community partnerships*, was published in 2002. Co-author Ms Libby Prescott from the University of Tasmania attests to the authorship of the case study as follows: Susan Johns (70%) and Libby Prescott (30%).

with some fin fish farming, in the sheltered waters of Franklin Harbour. A number of traditional farmers and fishermen have made the change, as aquaculture is less subject to climatic conditions and 'at least you know where your salt is'. In 1999, Cowell produced 46 per cent of South Australia's oyster crop. The industry is significant to the region in economic terms. As one oyster grower explained in the 1999–2000 financial year, 'they're talking a million dozen oysters production, which is five million bucks in round terms, which will be injected into this small economy ...'.

## **The school**

Cowell Area School had an enrolment, in 2000, of 192 students from Reception to Year 12, with six students in Year 11 and nine in Year 12, as well as approximately 20 part-time mature age students. School staff total 30, comprising 18 teaching staff and 12 ancillary staff, a number of whom are employed on a part-time basis. Aquaculture and the marine and littoral environment is a focus throughout the R–12 curriculum. The school has developed its own oyster farm in Franklin Harbour and has been registered as a member of OYSA (Oyster growers of South Australia) for the sale of oysters and potentially of other marine produce. Proceeds will go toward ongoing funding of its aquaculture program.

In addition, Cowell Area School has developed a two-year senior secondary Certificate in Aquaculture course as part of the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE). In 2000, there were three Year 11 students and one Year 12 student enrolled in the program. The course is also open to mature-age students, and students from outside Cowell are welcomed. Out-of-area students are accommodated in the new boarding house, which can accommodate six. Training is conducted as a component of more conventional SACE subjects such as Biology, Environmental and Maritime Studies, and Small Business Management. Students also gain experience in practical subjects such as small vessel handling and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), thereby gaining additional certification including their Boat Licence, Radio Operator's Certificate, and First Aid Certificate. All practical vocational subjects provide dual SACE/VET recognition by TAFE (at Certificate 1 or 2 level) or by the Australian Fishing Academy (AFA). Certificate in Aquaculture students also complete a significant practical component of regular work placements with local oyster growers, totalling 200 hours per student over two years.

At the time of our visit in August 2000, the school was in the process of reviewing its Certificate in Aquaculture course offerings to better match the competencies contained in the new Seafood Industry Training Package due for introduction in 2001. This included the proposed introduction of school-based apprenticeships in 2001.

The outward focus of the school is also reflected in its membership of the Eastern Eyre Peninsula Educational Cluster (EEPEC). An informal cluster arrangement has existed between Cowell, Cleve, Kimba and Lock Area Schools, and several primary schools, for a number of years. The schools formalised the arrangement in 2000. The cluster facilitates shared resources, staffing and professional development, as well as enhancing curriculum options, particularly for senior students. For example, as part of the cluster arrangement, the Area Schools each specialise in the teaching of a different VET area: Cowell (aquaculture), Cleve (agriculture) and Kimba (automotive). This broadens the senior secondary offerings to students within the school cluster, while allowing them to remain in their own communities. In addition, the viability of each of the small rural schools is enhanced, rather than threatened, because of its specialist, niche market VET offering.

The School Council voted to introduce new funding arrangements into the school in 2000, in the form of the new State Department of Education Training and Employment's Partnerships 21 initiative. Under Partnerships 21, participating schools are funded on a

three-year basis, and receive additional funding on the understanding that they pursue a greater degree of self-management.

## **School contribution to the community**

The school contributes to its community through a variety of both ongoing and event-based interactions. Ongoing interactions include teachers as a community resource, the sharing of school and community resources and facilities, and the school's aquaculture education program. Event-based interactions include a number of collaborative community Arts and environmental projects.

### **'Chalkies' as a community resource**

Staff at Cowell represent a skills base for a wide variety of activities in the local community, acting as initiators, motivators and/or coordinators. They feature as coaches, players or committee members in many of the sporting clubs in the town. These activities are a vital source of rural bonding within and between the widely dispersed towns of the Eyre region.

Staff also double as Adult Education teachers, running out-of-hours classes in woodwork, first aid or computing for parents and other community members. Because of their skills and knowledge, they are used as a community resource by local businesses when a computer breaks down or a program malfunctions. As one teacher pointed out, the rewards can't be quantified:

Quite often you get tea cooked for you, you know, come and fix up my computer I'll cook you tea. Good way to meet people ... and a positive ... reflection upon the school. I mean I never turn anybody down that wants help ... I spent an hour and a half at the newsagents just last week to help fix their computer system, and I don't get paid for that, there's no extra money gets put in my pocket. But it's ... not bad, that somebody from the school has those skills and they are willing to help.

### **Sharing resources**

In this small rural community the school is one of the main employers in the town and one of the few sources of regular and reliable income, so its financial importance can't be underestimated. The survival of school and community facilities, such as the swimming pool, is enhanced by their shared use or administration. The swimming pool was built on Education Department land but has only become viable since a community committee and swim club have taken over its administration and promoted its use. As one respondent commented, 'if they [resources] weren't shared neither party might be able to afford them'. Another community member commented on the meshing of school and community:

(It's) just complete knitted interaction ... the school runs the local newsletter which is how I get most of my information ... and the community puts into the newsletter for the feedback information that way. That alone I think just opens the weave up between the community and the school. The local library, and the supply of that, the community put into the library for the school use, and the school put their resources in there for the use of the community, so you get interaction there. The school swimming pool is used by the community, and vice versa ... the community put into the swimming pool.

The Community Library has been incorporated in the new school administration building, making it more visible and accessible to the public. It has brought people without other connections to the school into contact with the school and students. It is also used as an information technology centre to teach community members, including business operators, through occasional Internet cafés, and as a meeting room for the multiplicity of school and community committees. The costs for the Library are shared between the Education Department and the local council. It is run by a Board of Management, with representatives of school staff, local government, and community.

## **Aquaculture education**

### *Implementation*

Cowell Area School has received much positive publicity as a result of its ongoing aquaculture education initiatives, although some school and community representatives expressed concern that the emphasis on the aquaculture program has tended to overshadow other school contributions to the community. By the early 1990s, the school had already begun to develop an aquaculture focus in its general curriculum. It was a logical progression that the school would also assume a role in providing training to meet the needs of the region's burgeoning aquaculture industry. As a community member explained:

The aquaculture [course at school] evolved with the aquaculture industry ... there was seen a need that was met by the school rather than people who were interested in the industry having to move elsewhere for study in it.

The initial idea for the school to offer a vocational education and training (VET) aquaculture course came from a local oyster grower. This person also had formal links with the school, as a member of the School Council, as well as wider links in education and training circles at both TAFE and University level. The idea received strong support from the Principal and Deputy Principal.

Over the following months the Certificate in Aquaculture course was developed, in close consultation with a variety of industry, education and training bodies, including the South Australian Fishing Industry Training Council (SAFITC), the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA) and the Spencer Institute of TAFE at Port Lincoln. As the school did not have a model for the course, much time was devoted to developing a shared vision which would represent the needs of all stakeholders, and ensure a balance was reached between the industry and vocational focus, and the need to provide for tertiary-bound students. A community member recalls:

... everyone had a different idea and that's when you had a storming session that went on for a few years.

Local oyster growers have played and continue to play an important role in the Certificate in Aquaculture course development and the provision of student work placements, as well as in the provision of time and expertise in relation to the development and management of the school's own oyster lease.

Respondents reflected upon some of the problems encountered in setting up the Certificate in Aquaculture program. For example, school staff had to negotiate relationships with a variety of industry and other training organisations with whom they had not previously had any dealings. Other 'teething' troubles were related to school staffing issues, including the failure of staff to utilise the expertise of growers, and the relatively high staff turnaround and resulting lack of continuity of personnel, which slowed down the progress of the course. The following school staff member recalls community frustration:

Because it was such a new industry and a new idea and a niche marketing of school course I think it attracted some people that were looking at developing their résumés rather than developing the actual student growth in aquaculture. So those people have come and gone and now we've got a more stabilised group of people that are passionate about the students ...

### *Changing direction*

An initial Aquaculture Committee set up in 1993, comprised school staff and several oyster growers, as a sub-committee of the School Council. Following a crisis period in 1997, when the future of the Certificate in Aquaculture course looked uncertain, due to dwindling enrolments and lack of continuity of teaching staff, the original Committee was disbanded. A new aquaculture Board of Management was elected at a community meeting. The

composition of the new Board reflected its community-wide focus, with six community members (including several oyster growers), a fishing industry representative and a School Council representative, as well as the Principal, a staff representative, two students, and the school farm manager. The following representative from the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) outlined how the structure, role and degree of autonomy of the new Board of Management differed from that of the original Committee:

- The ... most significant thing is that we revamped the program so that it was actually largely managed by the community ... and I'm really grateful to people like [name of oyster grower] from [name of company] and a number of community people who have actually ... taken that on ...

The Board is a sub-committee of the School Council. It has input into all aspects of the Certificate in Aquaculture course including publicity and seeking sponsorship, and makes recommendations to the School Council regarding expenditure. The subsequent increased level of industry and business community involvement and support for the Certificate in Aquaculture is attributed, in some measure, to the activities of the Board of Management, as well as to the activities of the Aquaculture Liaison Officer, appointed on an externally-funded twelve-month contract in 2000.

Cowell again looked towards the Cleve Area School agricultural program to guide the development of its own program. This process was facilitated by the following Cowell aquaculture Board of Management member, who also had links with Cleve Area School:

... so we had a fair bit of knowledge of what was happening up there [at Cleve] ... they've had the same problems as we've had with the aquaculture, we've been able to talk and sort of change some of our problems by looking at what [Cleve has] done. Probably I think one of the major steps forward was having a farm manager, in both places. They [Cleve Area School] certainly weren't doing a lot of good until they got a farm manager, and I think we were struggling a bit until we got one too.

A farm manager was appointed in 1999 to manage the Cowell Area School oyster lease, an integral part of all aquaculture education at the school, including the Certificate in Aquaculture program. The farm manager had previously been the school groundsman, and his appointment was important because it provided continuity to the program and because his direct links with oyster growers facilitated greater sharing of information between school and industry. It also provided the out-of hours and school holiday maintenance that had been lacking previously.

### **Community Arts projects**

Cowell Area School has been, and is currently, involved with two major and several smaller Arts projects in the community. These have united the school, individuals, service and environment groups in very different ways, though the outcomes for the community are similar.

The catalyst for all these projects is a dynamic young Art teacher whose boundless enthusiasm and naivety let her attempt activities which may have daunted someone more experienced. On her posting to the town she noted the negative effect of empty shops in the main street. She persuaded one property owner to let her art class paint the shop front and use the shop windows to display students' work. The success of this inspired her to tackle the painting of a mural on another shop front. Now she is viewed as a community resource and is called upon to organise any art work for events about the town.

#### *The fish sculptures*

The idea for the fish sculptures came from a casual conversation between a community-minded parent and the art teacher. Because of the restrictions of the SA Country Arts

funding to non-school projects, this idea grew from the simple desire to beautify the school sign, to a striking group of sculpted metal fish spinning on poles at the entrance to the town. The initial support from businesses and participation by individuals was remarkable, with up to 17 people at a time, ranging in age from Year 7 students to men in their 70s, working for 3–5 hours a week over 10 weeks. Elderly people from the cottages for the aged, school students, the local welder and crash repairer, farmers, crane hire businesses, and members of service clubs all pooled resources, practical skills and time to help, as the Art teacher explains:

I had these drawings but ... if we made ... them they'd fall apart, like they wouldn't happen because they weren't practical. I wanted all these men, like farmers, I wanted the people with ideas that would make these things work, and I was excited that they did come.

The project extended beyond its budget, so at the time of our visit the organisers were looking to other external sources for funding to complete the work.

### **Community environment projects**

In 1995–96, the local Landcare group and school students used Federal Government funding to build a shadehouse at the school. The shadehouse was used for propagation of native plants, including mangroves, for replanting in a degraded causeway area. This, plus a series of other school–community projects, were the forerunners of the current ambitious school–community environmental/Arts activity, the mangrove boardwalk.

#### *The mangrove boardwalk: Combining Arts and the environment*

Cowell Area School is currently working in tandem with Coastcare, the local Lions Club and the Franklin Harbour Council to build a mangrove boardwalk, with information rotunda and signage describing the ecology, wildlife and history of Franklin Harbour. The aims of this National Heritage Trust-funded project are to educate locals and the growing numbers of tourists on the importance of mangroves to the local ecosystem, and to the oyster and fishing industry as a food source and fish nursery.

Secondary staff saw that such a project could be incorporated as part of a stage 1 integrated studies course, which requires a combination of individual and group work, and working with people from the community. The school students have designed the rotunda and are providing the visual, graphics and research component of the signage. The Lions Club will provide labour and some materials, and the local council will provide some mechanical input. Time delays in getting plans approved by the Commonwealth Government then the local council meant that the teacher had to use her school Art budget to get students working on the project at the start of the school year. This illustrates the difficulties encountered by collaborative projects in terms of differing funding schedules and time frames. The Coastcare facilitator pointed out:

In some areas we've had councils who have taken the plunge and then ... said we'll spend the \$7000 now and then if it doesn't come into us then we'll not spend money elsewhere. But I guess that's where some of the tricks lie, in terms of trying to keep everyone on the same agenda and same time frame. The risk is ... [with the Art teacher] now jumping in and getting the display stuff done, which is good, but if the school is kept waiting for the Lions and the Council to be ready then the academic year is finished and they are ready to ... build but the school is not ready.

As a spin-off for the aquaculture industry, through the students' involvement in environmental projects, the whole community is gaining a greater awareness of appropriate environmental practices. This will be vital to the survival of the industry in Franklin Harbour in order to prevent future conflict between foreshore development and the need for retention of the mangroves.

Aside from the many social and environmental benefits, the school impacts both directly and indirectly on the local economy. School expenditure contributes directly to local business. This regular source of income is important. The growth of the Certificate in Aquaculture course, its strategy of attracting students from outside the area, and the extent to which it has 'put Cowell on the map' in aquaculture terms, has had a direct impact on the local economy, particularly for the retail and hospitality sectors.

## **Discussion**

### **Nature and extent of the school's contribution to the community**

... the school is well respected as an institution in our community, it's working for everyone, it's proved that it can be relevant to our local circumstances ...

This case study provides evidence to suggest that the school is one of the reasons for the success of Cowell's 'reinvention', from a struggling, conservative rural community, to a burgeoning aquaculture, tourism and retirement centre with a promising future for its youth. Contributions of the school to the 'new' Cowell include the provision of facilities, equipment and expertise to a variety of individuals and groups both within the community and external to the community. Specifically, the school has played a significant role in supporting the growth, and helping to ensure the sustainability of, the aquaculture industry. It has done this by providing a local pool of skilled aquaculture trainees, by raising awareness within the aquaculture industry of issues such as OHS, and within the wider community of issues such as the management and protection of the marine and coastal environment. The school has also been responsible for the generation of economic benefits for the community. The gradually increasing population, and the attendant spin-offs such as increases in housing construction, and the need for increased provision of goods and services locally, are partly due to Cowell's growing reputation as an aquaculture centre; a reputation that the school has helped to build.

One of the key outcomes of the Certificate in Aquaculture has been the retention of youth in Cowell, largely due to the high employment rate of school VET graduates within the aquaculture and fin fish industries. A former student, who left school prior to the introduction of the Certificate in Aquaculture, recalls:

... not many people ever thought they'd leave school and be able to find a job in Cowell, but now the aquaculture course is available in Cowell ... there is an inclination ... if you wanted to stay in Cowell, you can do the aquaculture course, the aquaculture course has pretty well got a hundred per cent employment rate ...

This outcome has been well documented in previous research on Cowell Area School (Department of Education Training and Employment 1999; Martin & Vincent 1999). Employment of local young people is also important in helping to overcome difficulties, both in attracting and retaining trainees from outside the Cowell region, to work in the aquaculture and fishing industries. This difficulty is due to the 'lack of housing ... limited social opportunities and social networks, inadequate financial support for living away from home' (Department of Education Training and Employment 1999, p. 16). Respondents noted that fishing and aquaculture industry trainees recruited from within the region itself, often through the school's Certificate in Aquaculture program, are more likely to remain in the region once their training is completed because of their existing family and social networks.

The case study also illustrates how the school, through its sharing of resources, its collaborative Arts and environment projects, and its Certificate in Aquaculture program, contributes to the community's social wellbeing. Outcomes of these initiatives were reported as increased community self-confidence and pride, and facilitation of intergenerational trust. For example, the positioning of the new Community Library within the school, and the running of Internet cafés and IT classes, has encouraged greater



interaction as more people to drop into the school to learn together using shared resources. A member of the School Council explains:

It makes it easier for the older person because they can talk to the younger ones and relate to them little bit better, you know because the young one comes along and says "Oh I've got a computer that's got a hundred and twenty eight megabyte of RAM", you know the old lady's sitting there, "Well I thought rams run around in the paddock darling".

In another example, the Principal explains how the establishment of a boarding hostel to accommodate out-of-town aquaculture students at the school, stimulated much community interaction and participation, and was instrumental in broadening the community's outlook:

I was honestly quite surprised by the variety of people in the community who actually came to help, to establish gardens, volunteer their time and equipment ... all sorts of people that had nothing to do with the school, you know elderly people ... it actually opened up my eyes a bit in terms of the way a course like that, and our school and community, can make the best of opportunities that have arisen, and our community I think, which like I said has been very conservative, are really opening up their eyes and becoming a lot more flexible, I think themselves.

While the school reflects community attitudes, beliefs and aspirations, it has also been responsible for shaping some of these attitudes and beliefs. In a community characterised by cultural homogeneity and conservatism, staff from the school have introduced new ideas and new ways of doing things into the community. The school has played a role in changing attitudes in respect of the need to embrace change and seek new opportunities from outside the community, by modelling this approach itself. What is important, however, is the way the school has built firmly on positive past experiences and successes as it gradually steered a course into new waters. In this way, a traditionally conservative farming community has gradually grown to accept and embrace change.

The success of the Cowell Area School aquaculture program has not only had an impact locally, but has increased the status of rural schools in general. The following representative from the DETE explains how the school's influence has been felt in other parts of the State, in communities located hundreds of kilometres from Cowell:

... [the Certificate in Aquaculture] provides a focus for schools way outside the community and young people outside of this community to become involved in the industry, a growth industry. An example of that I suppose is [a community] almost 900 km north from here are now running an aquaculture program ... based largely on information and a comprehensive sharing of information between Cowell school community and that school community, so it has a big impact, there is no doubt.

## Leadership issues

### *The nature of the community: Leadership by committee*

Cowell has a very strong sense of community and an abundance of very active service and sporting clubs. In a community used to helping itself, there is a clearly defined and understood organisational structure and leadership process within Cowell. The implementation of new ideas is supported by a process of community consultation and action, most often through an existing committee or through the formation of a new committee. With its relatively high number of committees, and its relatively small population to fill committee roles, there is considerable overlap of roles. Whilst this can be beneficial in terms of enhancing networking capacity, the following ancillary staff member explains how the overlap of roles can cause problems for people:

We're also very busy changing our hats, like one person be involved in five different community hats, in a community group, and sometimes there can be a conflict of interest, and you think ... my goodness, what hat have I got on now?

Shared and inclusive community leadership processes reflect both the egalitarian nature of Cowell, and the large number of small, family-run farms and other businesses. Civic duties are shared, as is the credit for achievements. This involvement also appears to be very evenly distributed between genders and across all ages. In such a community, collaborative decision making, and shared management and leadership roles, are both accepted and expected. There is an unwillingness to single out individuals or particular groups of individuals for 'special' treatment. For example, larger landholders have the same say in community affairs as other community members, and, as the following School Council representative explains, teachers are regarded, first and foremost, as community members:

As soon as the teachers walked into the bar or the lounge, they were accepted straight away, you know they went to a group of parents, and they just talked, they didn't talk like teachers to parents and teachers to students, it was all one on one, everybody equal, but on the education side of it yeah I think it's a plus.

The community's increasing focus on the importance of youth to its future is reflected in youth representation on several community decision-making bodies, including the newly-formed Community Development Group. The following teacher comments on how youth participation in community leadership is facilitated by the relative ease of interaction between students of different ages and between students and adults in the community, with sport being the main link:

You can sit down at the footy and have quite a conversation with some of the kids about not just football but other things as well so, and you know that makes it easier ... for people to interact and get involved with our community.

#### *School leadership structure and processes*

Community leadership processes are reflected in and supported by school leadership structure and processes. In addition, school leadership processes provide a model for community leadership. For example, the key school decision-making body, the School Council, and its sub-committees, provide a model for the opening up of the community and a broadening of its leadership base. This reflects the Principal's aim to involve the general community more directly in school affairs:

I actually think the power has shifted quite a bit, from when I first came here ... back in those days I believe it was a very powerful group, and you tended to have the same people year after year involved in School Council. It tended to be mainly parents of the farming community. I think Council in the last two or three years has changed dramatically, we would have farming families represented ... mining families ... fishermen ... the aquaculture industry, we have people who are shop owners, or work in the business now ... we have a lot of single parents in our school, unemployed people as well ... and if people have got an issue with School Council ... I've worked very hard to get them onto School Council ... School Council to me is about getting a wide view of perspective.

In keeping with its youth focus, representatives of the Student Representative Council (SRC) are integral members of the School Council. There are also representatives of the local council and hospital on the School Council. In general, the broad base of the School Council provides for wide community consultation, although the recent purchase of a school bus that could also double as a community bus caused some concern amongst community members because of inadequate consultation with some of the potential stakeholders.

The reconstituted aquaculture Board of Management which provides leadership for the Certificate in Aquaculture program, also represents a diverse range of community and school stakeholders, and is chaired by a representative from the aquaculture industry. The school's conscious decision to redefine membership of the Board of Management has provided

opportunity for increased community leadership, and consequently, increased community ownership, of the program.

The organisational structure of the school supports leadership development within the community. For example, the relatively new community management committee for the boarding house is still 'finding its feet'. The school is guiding the committee's operation at present, by providing administrative and other support and advice as required. When the committee has gained experience and confidence in working together, the role of the school will diminish.

School leadership processes have been increasingly assuming an outward-looking focus. For example, the implementation of the Certificate in Aquaculture in 1993 required the forging of relationships with a number of external funding, training, and other support organisations. The school's membership of the Eastern Eyre Peninsula Educational Cluster is another example, in which Cowell formalised and is beginning to extend mutually beneficial relationships with other schools in the region, in order to facilitate further resource and information sharing, and to maximise student learning outcomes. This 'opening up' of the school is beginning to be reflected in the community, for example, in the extent to which local groups are now beginning to seek external sources of funding for community projects. In the past service clubs and groups like the Parents and Friends (P & F) looked locally for funding. They now display a growing awareness of the need to look beyond Cowell for financial support. This outward focus has also been motivated by economic circumstances, as an ancillary staff member explains:

We can see from our students, that the things aren't going well at home, and financially everyone is really strapped, and instead of us trying to draw on everyone in the community with the struggle ... we've had to seek funding outside of our community, and I think we're more aware these days of the different buckets that there are out there, and of course we get expertise coming in from outside our community that make us aware of what's out there ... I suppose that we've had to really open our eyes ... it's sort of 'wake up and smell the coffee, you can't stay afloat on your own, you need help' ... whereas before I felt that ... we were pretty closed.

#### *Leadership roles within the school and community*

Many informal and formal leadership roles within the community are occupied by women. This is reflected within the school, in which three senior administrative positions are filled by women. It comes as no surprise that the community has produced two ABC South Australian Rural Women of the Year in recent times.

Building on the work of the previous Principal in ensuring the school is responsive to the needs of its youth, and flexible in the way those needs are met, the current Principal continues to empower others within school and community to help realise this vision. She has done this by being willing to take on board new ideas, whether initiated by community members or school staff, by providing support for these ideas, and by fostering a supportive and collaborative school culture. The result of this has been the willingness of school staff to take a leading role in school-community initiatives, such as the role being undertaken by the Art teacher in the community Arts fish sculpture project. In addition, a key role undertaken by the Principal is one of fostering community participation in school decision making and empowering community members to take on key leadership roles. For example, the idea for the Certificate in Aquaculture came from an oyster grower. After initial discussions and support from the Principal and Vice-Principal, the oyster grower used her extensive external networks to identify and bring together representatives from education and training, fishing industry and research sectors, to plan and develop the program. By bringing together people and resources to plan for the future, this person played an important role in enabling the school and community to meet its needs. In turn, her actions were made possible by the level of support provided by the Principal and Vice-Principal.

Empowerment of staff and community members has been the result of a continuous school leadership process characterised by trust, open and two-way communication, and inclusivity. By putting the needs of the students before her own ambitions, and utilising her extensive networks within the community, the current Principal continues to build trust and continues to further embed the school within its community. The following comment from a representative of the School Council illustrates this:

... some Principals are a bit different, like some like to push their own barrow and ... they come to school and say I'm here for four years or five years and I want to do this, this and this, whereas the Principal we've got at the moment says our kids need and this is what we will be doing while I'm here, and I think that's a better option, lot better.

The Principal fosters open communication and consultation between staff, and between staff and community through vehicles such as the School Council. The school and the community both use and value 'leadership by committee', where leadership is a shared process, and decision making and responsibility are open and transparent as well as shared. This openness also extends upward, in respect of the relationship between the school and the Department of Education regional office. The 'open discussion' and 'honest opinion' evident in interactions between the Department of Education regional office and the Principal from Cowell, as well as Principals from each of the schools in the Eastern Eyre Peninsula Educational Cluster, suggests a transparency of leadership at all levels. There is also clear evidence of the alignment of values between community, school, and regional office, regarding the integral role of the school in the community, where all 'value and appreciate the school being really a part of the community'.

The Principal has worked hard to implement the school philosophy of inclusivity to ensure the school is better able to meet the needs of its community. She provides opportunities for the knowledge, skills and talents of a wide variety of community members to be both recognised and utilised. In so doing, she is building the confidence and facilitating the participation of community members who may not consider themselves 'leaders' and who may not ordinarily participate in school or community activities. The following respondent, who, because of difficult economic circumstances, felt marginalised within the community, explains:

I said to [the Principal], 'We're not really involved that much in the community' and she said, 'Yes you are', and I said, 'No we're not really'. She goes, 'Too bad, would you still do it?'. 'Oh alright'.

## **Other influencing factors**

### *Within the school and community*

Of particular importance for ongoing school–community links is continuity of human resources. It was noted that the development of the Certificate in Aquaculture program, for example, was impeded by lack of continuity of school personnel. However, a number of respondents issued a clear warning that continuity of school staff needed to be carefully balanced against the need for the fresh ideas and enthusiasm of new staff. In the case of the Certificate in Aquaculture, the problem of staff continuity was partly overcome by involving and continuing to involve local oyster growers and other community representatives closely in its management. This allowed 'for continuance in the event of school personnel moving from the area [as] there is a continuing supply of local personnel with knowledge of the program, its aims and intended outcomes' (Department of Education Training and Employment 1999, p. 16).

Publicity of the school's and community's successes in relation to the community Arts program and Certificate in Aquaculture, in both local and regional newspapers, and at venues such as local and regional agricultural field days, also has been important to the community.

Very much aware of the importance of publicity and, in particular, good public relations, the school actively sought opportunities to share its successes with others. Positive publicity has contributed to the sustainability of existing school–community linkages, and to the formation of new linkages, by increasing community confidence, trust and pride, and by encouraging groups to seek new opportunities for community development from previously untapped external sources. Through publicity and awareness raising, the school's successful aquaculture program has been modelled in schools elsewhere within the State,—a powerful affirmation of the collective efforts of the school in partnership with its community. In addition, it has enhanced the reputation of the school, which, in turn has helped to maintain and even increase student enrolment numbers, resulting in the continued viability of some curriculum offerings, including the Certificate in Aquaculture. The retention of senior students has impacted favourably on the school's capacity to contribute to its community.

#### *Outside the school and community*

As in the other case study sites, access to resources is critical to the implementation of many school–community linkages. Regarding the Certificate in Aquaculture program, access to external funding was enhanced by the nature and timeliness of the proposed activity. However, external funding for other initiatives, such as environmental and community Arts projects, could be difficult to access and could cause administrative problems. Inexperience in budgeting on the part of organisers means that if a project goes over budget (as happened with the fish sculptures), alternative sources of finance are hard to find, putting added pressure on the organisers. One way that the school found to address funding restrictions, was to form mutually-beneficial partnerships with other parties. In the case of the Certificate in Aquaculture, a collaborative arrangement was entered into with the two Registered Training Organisations involved in the delivery of certain aspects of the program:

... with the TAFE units that are auspiced, we can teach them and they don't charge us for the documentation and the validation of those. The AFA are running programs here, and so they're benefiting by having a site within the town that they don't then have to hire for instance, so in both of those it tends to be cost neutral.

A number of systemic factors have also influenced the formation and maintenance of school–community partnerships. Systemic factors include the influence of the policies and practices of a variety of government departments (including the South Australian Department of Education Training and Employment), as well as industry-based and other organisations. For example, the Certificate in Aquaculture program is set within the context of a number of government initiatives currently in operation to assist young people. These initiatives include the Eyre Peninsula Regional Strategy, the State Strategic Plan for Vocational Education and Training, and the Vocational Education in Schools Strategy (Department of Education Training and Employment 1999). The recent formalisation of a previously informal school cluster arrangement within Eastern Eyre Peninsula was also significant. These systemic factors have influenced the development of the Certificate in Aquaculture, in particular, by locating their shared purposes and goals within an educational and regional development framework, by clearly articulating those goals to all stakeholders, and by putting in place practices to facilitate desired outcomes, such as the coordination of VET offerings through the school cluster arrangement.

Additionally, the introduction by the Commonwealth Government of traineeships, as part of the VET system, played an important role in the development of the Certificate in Aquaculture. For example, in 1997, when the Certificate in Aquaculture program was in crisis, the introduction of traineeships provided a structured training partnership and motivated a greater number of oyster growers to become actively involved, as the following oyster grower explains:

And (at) the crunch time what really got that going again was timing, because the traineeships came out. So there was the incentive of how much was it to have a trainee.

However, there are several systemic issues that need to be resolved, particularly in relation to the Certificate in Aquaculture program. For example, the introduction of VET-in-schools programs has highlighted the inadequacy of current school insurance, and there is some concern that activities outside those normally undertaken by schools, such as transporting students by boat to the school's oyster, lease may not be covered. At the time of our visit the school was working with the Department of Education, Training and Employment to resolve this situation. The other key issue related to the high cost of public liability insurance required of oyster growers, to protect their employees and students on work placements. The cost was found to be prohibitive for smaller growers who were unable to take on students, thus reducing the number of work placements available within the community.

Although it is too soon to assess the impact of the Partnerships 21 funding arrangements, there is a firm belief that the financial autonomy promised by Partnerships 21 will further enhance the school's capacity to contribute to its community.

## For the future

In the future there are indications that closer links will need to be forged between the aquaculture and fishing industries, and environmental groups, in order to continue with efforts to preserve the region's marine and coastal environment. It is important that the community does not become complacent because there is no immediate threat to its environment. It is suggested that the school, through its staff and students, and its curriculum-based and non-curriculum-based community initiatives, can and does play an important role in maintaining community vigilance regarding environmental protection, and in facilitating interactions between key stakeholders. In particular, students have the potential to take these ideas out into the community with their youthful energy, supplementing the limitations of an aging retired population. It should be borne in mind, however, that the full impact of the school's program in aquaculture education is yet to be seen.

In other areas, there is still potential for increased consultation between school and other community bodies such as the hospital and local council, before resources are purchased, to ensure optimum sharing of these resources. Finally, it is suggested there may be scope for increased provision of IT training to community members by the school's trained staff, as well as the provision of community access to computer infrastructure through the proposed establishment of a Telecentre in the shared school-community library. Overall, however, the findings presented in this case study suggest that the Cowell community, with its abundance of social capital (trust between individuals and groups, and willingness and ability of the community to work and learn together), is in a very good position not only to respond to change but, more importantly, to initiate it.

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# Margaret River: Making the most of every opportunity<sup>4</sup>

Margaret River is a community with a strong focus on youth. It could be argued that such an environment facilitates the development of school–community initiatives, and to a certain extent this is true. However, Margaret River has not always been this way. The community went through a difficult period in the early 1990s, where intergenerational trust was low, and youth engagement in the community gradually declining. It was only after a concerted effort by school and community leadership committed to change, that the situation was gradually reversed. By adopting a whole-of-town approach to education, school and community developed a new network of relationships and began to work together in ways never before considered. Drawing on the skills, expertise and networks of individuals from school and community, new opportunities for developing school–community linkages were actively sought, from both the public and private sector. Funding was obtained to undertake a number of pilot projects, and both school and community gained a reputation for innovation and best practice in a number of areas. Margaret River was one of the first communities to introduce a Youth Advisory Council which later became a model of best practice within Western Australia; while Margaret River Senior High School was one of the first schools in the State to introduce structured workplace learning (SWL) and to set up a community advisory committee to manage its structured workplace learning program. Today Margaret River is a community with increasing levels of intergenerational trust, which recognises and celebrates the contributions of its youth. The role of the school in facilitating this change is the focus of this case study.

## The site

Margaret River refers to both the township and to the wine-growing region in the south-west corner of Western Australia, stretching from Cape Naturaliste in the north to Cape Leeuwin in the south, and approximately 30 km inland from the coast. The region spans two Shires: the Shire of Busselton to the north, and the Shire of Augusta Margaret River covering the central and southern areas. Due to limitations in terms of time, and human and financial resources, it was decided to focus on the community of Margaret River represented by the Augusta Margaret River Shire (population in 2000 of 9953 (ABS 2001)). Within the Shire the major town is Margaret River (population 2846 (ABS 1996)), but now estimated by Shire officials to be approximately 4000, followed by Augusta (population 1087 (ABS 1996)), and then by the smaller communities of Witchcliffe and Karridale in the south, and Cowaramup and Gracetown in the north. There is a relatively high level of population mobility; in the 1996 Census only 40 per cent of the population were recorded as living at the same address five years before (ABS 1996).

The region is experiencing rapid growth in terms of its economy and population, largely as a result of flourishing viticulture and tourism industries. The pleasant lifestyle and surfing opportunities also attract many newcomers to the region. Whilst a number of families have been and are still involved in dairy farming, recent years have seen the sale of some dairy properties to large viticulture concerns. Both the viticulture and tourism industries provide

<sup>4</sup> This case study was written by Susan Johns and Libby Prescott and appeared as Chapter 6 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) who funded this research. The final report, *More than an Education: Leadership for rural school-community partnerships*, was published in 2002. Co-author Ms Libby Prescott from the University of Tasmania attests to the authorship of the case study as follows: Susan Johns (90%) and Libby Prescott (10%).

employment opportunities in the region, although these are largely casual and seasonal. The region also supports a relatively healthy small business sector. The growing number of large and profitable wineries in the region, and relatively high prices for goods and services which are aimed towards the upper end of the tourist market, give rise to a perception that the community is wealthy. However, a number of people commented on the 'unemployment problem' in the community, particularly amongst young people who had moved down from the city for lifestyle reasons and were unable (some residents said 'unwilling') to secure permanent work. Statistics show the unemployment rate was 8.9 per cent in 1996 (ABS 1998); of the five case study sites, Margaret River had the second highest rate of unemployment after Meander.

Locals describe the community as 'eclectic' because of the diverse backgrounds, lifestyles and values of its population, including dairy farmers, viticulturalists, professionals such as school teaching staff, local small business owners and operators, environmentalists and alternative lifestyleurs, and the unemployed. Because of this diversity, conflict is inevitable; however one of the community's strengths is the way in which many of these conflicts are managed and resolved through dialogue.

After being in Margaret River for only a short time, a number of things strike you:

- The number of diverse groups that make up the community and the community strength that seems to come from this diversity.
- The 'can do' attitude in which formation of committees and sourcing of external funding for projects is second nature to many within the community.
- The large number of services and facilities within the community that tend not to be present in many other communities of similar size, including the Aquatic Centre, Skate Park, and Youth Café.
- The value that the community places on education and hence, its strong support for all the local schools.
- The strong focus on youth and the generally positive perception of youth in the community as compared with largely unfavourable perceptions of youth in many other communities within the State (Office of Youth Affairs 1998, pp. 113, 115, 118).

The community focus on youth has been developing gradually over the past six years. Prior to 1995, there was evidence (in a survey of local small business conducted by the Business Enterprise Centre) to suggest that youth were not held in high regard by local businesses. The business sector, in particular, was unwilling to accept youth as employees or even as customers. Commencing in 1995, the school and community took steps to address this problem. With the upgrading of the High School to Senior High School status in 1995, after extensive lobbying by school and community members, school retention rates for senior students began to improve. The subsequent introduction of a senior curriculum at Margaret River Senior High School, which included SWL and Enterprise Education, helped to break down the barriers between youth and the (largely business) community. Around the same time, a Youth Advisory Council, with links to the Shire Council, was established in response to expressed youth needs within the community. The Western Australian Office of Youth Affairs later adopted it as a model for youth participation in community decision making, and it is now in place in a number of communities throughout the State. In addition, young people themselves commented that the local newspaper played an important role in helping to build intergenerational trust by promoting positive attitudes towards youth (Office of Youth Affairs 1998, p. 118).



## **The schools**

The region supports eight schools: four government primary schools, one government senior high school, and three privately-run primary schools (one Catholic, one Montessori, and one family-run school). There are a number of mutually beneficial linkages between the state government schools through sharing of resources, jointly organised sporting and other activities, and the Leeuwin Principals Group which provides a forum for discussion and professional development for state school principals in the area. Similar sharing of resources and joint activities exists between the private schools, though there are fewer linkages between the private and state government schools. All schools enjoy parental involvement. Some, such as the family-run school, require large amounts of parental input into all facets of the school's activities, while parental involvement in state government schools revolves largely around traditional forms of involvement such as the canteen, or membership of the Parents and Citizens (P & C) and School Council/Management Group. Jointly the schools provide some of the most stable and permanent employment opportunities in the community.

Margaret River Senior High School is the focal point for this case study because of its extensive links with the community. With an enrolment of approximately 600 students from Years 8 to 12 and approximately 50 teaching staff, the school provides secondary and senior secondary education for the entire Augusta Margaret River Shire. It is centrally located in Margaret River township at the 'top' of the town and evidence suggests that the community looks up to the school both literally and metaphorically. Prior to the school gaining senior high status in 1995, students wishing to continue to Years 11 and 12 were bussed to the nearest senior high school some 45 km north of Margaret River. Still others left the region to attend boarding schools, often hundreds of kilometres away.

The school has extensive linkages with, and enjoys strong support from, a wide variety of community sectors. These sectors include: the small business sector (through participation in SWL and Enterprise Education); the viticulture and other rural industry sectors (through the school farm and vineyard); the Shire Council (through student and staff participation in the Youth Advisory Council; through staff membership of the Shire's waste management steering committee); other educational providers (Curtin University, Edith Cowan University and TAFE through the proposed Centre for Wine Excellence); the health sector (the hospital's Director of Nursing is a member of the School Management Group); voluntary emergency services groups (through participation in the State Emergency Services (SES) cadet scheme); the local media; parents (through participation in the P & C and School Management Group); youth and the churches (through the school chaplaincy); retired citizens (through participation in the school's volunteer reading program), and special needs groups (through the community networking program for disabled students). In addition, close ties were formed between the school and a local service club in 1995, when the incoming President of the service club was also the newly elected President of the school's P & C group. This partnership has seen the realisation of a number of ongoing linkages, which have further enhanced the school's capacity to contribute to the community. These linkages include: a mock interview program which links service club members and senior students; partial sponsorship of the school chaplaincy together with sponsorship provided by local churches and the school's P & C group; and sponsorship of a variety of scholarships and leadership opportunities for youth.

## **School contribution to the community**

Margaret River Senior High School, along with the focal schools in each of the other study sites, contributes to its community by way of two key vehicles: curriculum-based and resource-based contributions. Curriculum-based contributions refer to those school-community linkages that have been built specifically to support the development of curriculum options for students. Most interviewees felt that the curriculum reflected the philosophy of formal school leaders to make the school as inclusive as possible and to provide 'a holistic education using a whole-of-town approach'. For example, inclusivity was fostered

by programs which targetted specific groups such as disabled students, and students with low levels of literacy and numeracy, while holistic education was fostered by a variety of school curriculum offerings that represented a balance between vocational and general education. A whole-of-town approach, utilising the resources of the community, was central to many curriculum offerings. Whilst the curriculum options were considered effective by most interviewees in fostering inclusivity, a small number commented on the need for additional school structures and initiatives to be put in place to facilitate the assimilation of students from the Augusta community into Margaret River Senior High School. Most interviewees also commented favourably on the holistic focus of the school curriculum, although a small number of interviewees perceived that a better balance was needed between the strong academic focus of the school and the less 'academic' areas of student development such as the creative arts.

Resource-based contributions refer to the use of shared resources such as the community aquatic and recreation centre which is a shared school/community facility, and the commercial kitchen located within the school which is shared between the school and TAFE. There are a number of other instances in which the school makes its facilities, such as the school auditorium, available for the use of others. This situation is facilitated by a proactive Education Department policy on community use of school facilities:

It is government policy to encourage and support the use of school resources by the wider community. Ideally, community use of schools should occur as widely as is consistent with the educational objectives of the school and should take account the needs of the community (Education Department of Western Australia, *Community Use of School Facilities Policy Guidelines*, June 1997<sup>5</sup>).

However, it was noted by one interviewee that issues such as insurance (for example, the cost of public liability insurance) may be prohibitive for some small community interest groups wishing to utilise school premises to run short courses and workshops.

The school also contributes significantly to the community through its human resources, that is, through students and staff using their skills and expertise for the good of the community. This is in keeping with the philosophy of formal school leaders that the school should lead its community. The following parent, involved in school governance, explains:

There is a very clear policy on the part of [the Principal] and backed up by his very able deputies, that this school must interact with its community and must welcome its community and must lead its community ... it's [the Principal's] vision and it really has made the school as inclusive as it is ...

Because of the extensive nature of the contributions of Margaret River Senior High School to the community, this case study cannot do justice to all those contributions. Instead, four areas have been selected for discussion: three represent curriculum-based vehicles for the school's contributions to the community (vocational and career programs, school recycling, and the volunteer reading program), and the fourth represents a resource-based contribution (SES cadet scheme). These areas have been selected as being representative of the nature and extent of the contributions of the school to its community.

### **Vocational and career education programs**

When it gained senior high school status in 1995, the school needed to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of its new cohort of senior students. In designing this new curriculum, school leaders made a conscious decision not to offer discrete vocational programs but to

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<sup>5</sup> Since our visit to Margaret River, the new *School Education Act 1999* and *School Education Regulations 2000* came into operation, on 1 January 2001. As a result of this, a review of the EDWA's policies, procedures and guidelines was underway at the time this case study was being prepared.

offer instead 'a comprehensive general education that would best prepare [students] for further study, employment, enterprising self-employment and citizenship' (Gorham 1998). This included the introduction of a Work Studies program incorporating SWL, where senior students are mentored by local business owner-operators as they participate in a total of 120 hours of structured work experience spread over their school holidays. The program also includes an enterprise education component, designed to foster entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in youth. As part of enterprise education, students participate in activities such as the annual Enterprise Day which brings together students and local small business owner/operators. Enterprise Day was pioneered by the Margaret River Business Enterprise Centre in 1996 and has since become a national model.

Both SWL and enterprise education were first implemented in Margaret River in the mid-1990s. Keen to adopt the newly-developed national vocational education model of structured workplace learning for senior students, the school's VET Coordinator recommended to the Principal that funding be sought to implement the program. The recommendation received strong support from the Principal, as it fitted well with the school philosophy of education using a whole-of-town approach. At the same time, the Margaret River Business Enterprise Centre was in the process of revising its focus and goals, to better meet the needs of local small business operators. Following a survey of the needs of local small business operators, the Business Enterprise Centre decided to target youth training and development as a key focus for its activities. It attracted funding to implement a pilot enterprise education program for school students, which facilitated a close working relationship between the Business Enterprise Centre and the school. The relationship is built on shared core values, in that the school philosophy to provide a 'holistic education using a whole-of-town approach, which lifts the self-esteem and confidence of all ... eliminating ... any investment in the "tall poppy syndrome"' (Gorham & Collins 1999, p. 46), is consistent with the philosophy of the Business Enterprise Centre which considers enterprise education in Margaret River as the responsibility of the school, the business community and the Business Enterprise Centre (Maidment 1998).

As with most other initiatives introduced within the school, the process of implementing SWL and enterprise education was carefully researched and planned to align with the needs of students (in terms of vocational, career and personal development) and the community (in terms of increasing vocational awareness, knowledge and skills amongst youth). They were also designed to align with key industries in the region (local small businesses, hospitality/tourism, viticulture), and to draw upon the wealth of expertise and skills available within the community. In developing the initiatives, the school's VET Coordinator and the facilitator of the Business Enterprise Centre each played a key role in gaining the trust and support of local business people. Speaking of his role in building employer support for SWL, for example, the school VET Coordinator highlights the importance of communication and consultation:

[We] let the employers know that they are part of a process and we always talk of them as business partners and there's no such thing as we've decided to do this, it has to be a process of consultation and how would this go down.

To ensure community concerns and interests were represented, key community stakeholders were involved in the planning and development of the vocational and career education programs offered through the school. For example, stakeholders from the business sector participated in reference groups, convened by the Business Enterprise Centre, to determine the direction of enterprise education, while a committee of school staff and community members including the facilitator of the Business Enterprise Centre, the President of the P & C, and key industry and service club leaders, was formed to manage the SWL program. Its members were recognised as leaders in the community, with extensive networks within and outside Margaret River. Committee members were able to ensure the program was well

received and supported by the business sector, and also undertook the day-to-day organisation of the program, including the recruitment of new employers. The following committee member, himself a small business owner/operator, believes the leadership role of the committee has been one of the strengths of the program:

I think that is one of the strengths of the program that [an employer having problems with an SWL student] rang me and not the school, yeah, I think that just shows how strong the committee was ... and people recognised that the committee were very much part of running the show, that they could talk to us and that was as good as talking to the school.

The committee has been so successful in empowering employers to take control of the program, that it has gone into recess. Several of its members are now involved in other planning committees, including planning for the new Centre of Wine Excellence, that will see a university presence in Margaret River.

SWL is now essentially self-managing, with individual employers initiating contact with the school as appropriate. The business community now has an expectation of ongoing participation in the program, which would suggest that the sustainability of the program seems assured. However, on our return visit to the site in June 2001 to present findings from the study, the Principal and VET Coordinator expressed concern about the future of SWL due to recommendations contained in a recently released state government review into Post Compulsory Education (Curriculum Council 2000). The review recommends an integration of general and vocational learning, which would see SWL offered only as an extension program for some courses, rather than as a program in its own right. There is some indication, however, that the position presented in the review may not have received widespread acceptance within the State. Coupled with this review, the school reported a growing reluctance among students to participate in SWL during their school holidays. As a result of both the review and student concerns, the school is currently in the process of reviewing its SWL policy and procedures.

### **School recycling**

The school runs a recycling program, which includes paper recycling, and a worm farm designed to use waste products from the school farm. It is coordinated by a member of the teaching staff, as an integral part of the curriculum for a Year 10 Maths class requiring extra numeracy tuition, and also receives support from other students. The recycling program began in 1999 as the result of the teacher's concern about paper wastage within the school. The idea of introducing a school recycling program was subsequently supported by formal school leadership. Initially, the teacher did much of the coordination of the project in his spare time, but support in terms of allocation of non-contact hours to coordinate the program has since been provided by school administration. School recycling efforts are enhanced by the support of several other staff members who assist in publicity and the preparation of funding applications. The program has been successful in attracting funding from several government and private sources, which has allowed the project to develop more quickly because funds have been available for the purchase of large items of equipment. The recycling program also receives community support. For example, a local bricklayer has offered his services to build large composting bays so paper recycling can be undertaken on a larger scale, and the resulting compost fed back into the school vineyard. As the program develops, it is expected that more community support will be sought.

As well as reducing paper wastage within the school, the program has raised school and community awareness of the need to recycle materials where possible. It has provided a model and source of leadership for the community-recycling program instituted by the Shire Council only recently. In addition, the teacher in charge of the school recycling program is a member of the Shire Council waste management steering committee, and runs workshops on

worm farming and composting for the Shire. This further facilitates the sharing of knowledge and expertise between school and community. The program is also a source of enterprise education for students, who, at the time of our visit, were in the process of planning, developing and marketing wooden newspaper stackers to aid community members in newspaper recycling.

### **Volunteer reading program**

For students with identified literacy needs, the school has been operating a volunteer reading program which started in 1998. The purpose of the program is to match community volunteers with students in need of extra literacy tuition and support in terms of developing self-confidence. It recruits mainly retired members of the community as volunteer literacy tutors/mentors, to work with students on a one-to-one basis once a week. Community volunteers are recruited largely by word of mouth, through service clubs and the church community. The Coordinator describes why the program intentionally targetted retired community members:

We felt that's what would be best for the program, the students would feel comfortable with a grandfather, or a grandmother, figure ... I thought they would have more time to give.

The idea for introducing a reading program in the school first came from the school's literacy teacher, who worked with the school literacy committee to plan its implementation. Because of her workload, the literacy teacher was unable to coordinate the program, so the school Librarian, who was also a member of the literacy committee, volunteered for the position. Although it is modelled on a statewide community volunteer literacy program, the school runs its own program independently, as the state program was oversubscribed, and the need in the school for additional literacy tutoring was pressing. No funding was available to set up the program, 'just the time that we gave to it', although some school library funding was used to purchase initial resources. Subsequently, school administration has allocated a small amount of annual funding to the program.

There have been some problems caused by lack of sufficient space to accommodate tutors and students, and the heavy workload of the Coordinator in terms of the amount of time needed to research, develop and implement the necessary procedures to provide adequate support and protection for both students and community volunteers. The program is still evolving, and solutions to these concerns were being considered at the time of our visit.

Despite the concerns noted above, the volunteer reading program has achieved a level of success in terms of improving the literacy, interpersonal skills, and self-confidence of students. It has also provided an outlet for retired people, a hitherto largely untapped resource in Margaret River, to contribute to the community.

### **State Emergency Services cadets**

In 1998, the school also set up an SES cadet scheme. The purpose of the program is to foster leadership development within youth, particularly amongst the '80 per cent of kids who are just average kids, they'll never need special help and they'll never be high flyers'. The program was established as part of the cadet-in-high-schools scheme, an initiative of the Western Australian Office of Youth Affairs. With the support of the Principal, a representative from the Office of Youth Affairs facilitated a public meeting to gauge community support for the initiative. The meeting was attended by senior high school staff and P & C representatives, representatives from the region's other schools, and a number of individuals already involved in emergency services groups, such as the Bush Fire Brigade. The community indicated their support for the initiative at that meeting, and a teacher from Margaret River Senior High School accepted the position of Cadet Coordinator. It was decided at the community meeting to run an SES cadet scheme rather than a military cadet

scheme, to reflect the strong environmental focus of the community and in recognition of the activities of the SES in respect of a recent coastal tragedy in the region.

Although the scheme is strongly supported by formal school leadership, and makes use of school facilities and equipment, it does not operate as part of the school curriculum, as is the case in some other schools within the State. Instead, school leaders decided the program would be run on an optional basis out of school hours. The reason for this was to ensure greater community involvement and ownership, and ultimately, sustainability of the program.

The program relies, to a large extent, on the support of individuals from the region's various emergency services groups (including the State Emergency Services and Bush Fire Brigade), who provide many of the physical and human resources necessary for cadet training. The teacher who coordinates the cadets has spent much time building this support base, both within the school and community. A school staff member explains:

[Name of teacher] runs that program, now he's the one with the vision, the drive, the enthusiasm to make it happen. No community member would come in and make it happen within the school. So he's the key person there, but you know he's got the nous to realise that he's got to get other key people on side. So he's got our fire chief from the local district involved in that ... he's got parents involved in that, he's got other teachers involved in that, he works with student services who have got people like our chaplain, school psych and our year leaders, and because of that one key person, then engaging all of those others, it happens ...

Parents are also important resources, providing assistance according to their abilities and interests. For example, by voluntarily taking on responsibility for arranging organisational details like transport and equipment for camps, parents have freed up the Coordinator to undertake other activities. The Principal explains:

Schools don't have to worry about going and organising support structures and trucks and stuff like that ... they [community members] put up their hands to organise bits and pieces which is great ... that's why I think we can sustain the programs, because without their support you couldn't sustain it ...

As well as providing leadership opportunities for youth and community members, the cadet scheme has increased young people's awareness of the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits of community volunteerism.

## **Discussion**

### **Nature and extent of the school's contribution to the community**

The introduction of Years 11 and 12 into the school in 1995, and the subsequent development of increased school-community linkages, particularly through curriculum-based initiatives such as SWL, enterprise education, and the volunteer reading program, saw a number of benefits for the youth of Margaret River. These included increased school retention rates and increased academic achievement in comparison with other schools within the State. For example, the Principal notes that for 'the last two years we've been one of the top two performing schools on tertiary entrance results, and we've been up there in the top 20 schools of all schools, government and private and metropolitan and country'. As young people became involved to a greater extent in the economic, social and civic life of the community, they gained skills, knowledge, experience and a greater understanding of the way in which workplaces and voluntary organisations operate. For some students these increased linkages with the adult community led to part-time employment while still at school, to apprenticeships or traineeships on leaving school, or to opportunities for self-employment. For most students, the key outcome was that they learned more about themselves, their capabilities and the value of their contributions to the community. They reported increased levels of self-confidence and self-esteem as a result of these interactions, as the following SWL student explains:

... I think it does a lot for your personality, getting out and doing work experience ... I think mostly I'm grateful that I actually made sort of friends out of more adults in the community that I never would have met otherwise.

Individuals within the community have also benefited from increased linkages with the school. For retired citizens, purposeful involvement with the school through the volunteer reading scheme has helped to increase their feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem, and of being needed and valued within the community. The following retired community member explains:

I just absolutely love it, you know I really love this boy so much and the nice thing is that I think he might think I'm alright, so you know it's a very satisfying thing, the contact ... and I felt attracted to the idea of being involved in the community ... in something that I felt confident I could do ...

Employers involved with the school through SWL also reported increased self-confidence and self-esteem as their skills and knowledge were recognised and valued by the school. Some employers reported an increase in their own management and leadership skills and abilities, as a result of working with school staff in planning and providing work placement experiences for students.

The school has played a role in shaping not only school culture, but also community culture. Through the activities of the Principal, and supported by other formal school leaders, a school culture has been forged in which, as one parent notes, 'standards are high, and the standards are set and maintained, they're not easily compromised'. These standards of excellence have become part of the community culture as well, as the following P & C member notes:

Before the Principal's arrival in 1994 there was a culture in the town and the school of near enough is good enough, and I think his crusading zeal has left its mark and not only on the school but very much on the community.

One of the key contributions of the Margaret River Senior High School to its community is the role it has played in helping to reintegrate youth back into the community. School initiatives such as the volunteer reading program and SWL have helped to foster greater understanding and cooperation between different age groups. The building of community capacity in terms of fostering intergenerational trust has been particularly significant to Margaret River. By the early 1990s the barriers that had gradually built up between youth and the business sector, in particular, had resulted in a lack of youth engagement in the community and low levels of trust between the two groups. Some six years later, the findings of a study by the Western Australian Office of Youth Affairs tell a different story, as the following teacher explains:

... and this report now in 1999 ... says that the view of the town's employers of young people in the school is excellent. So if we've got a turn around in six years like that then something must have happened. And when we look at it I suppose, in our role of responsibility is that it's the work-based learning programs, our cadet programs, and community networking and so on and so forth, and [the Principal's] insistence that the community comes into the school and teachers go out into the community.

The other key community outcome of school initiatives such as the SES cadets has been awareness raising of the importance of volunteerism in the community. The development and maintenance of a healthy volunteer sector is acknowledged as integral to rural community development (Kenyon 1999). By raising youth awareness of the personal and community benefits of volunteerism, through school-community initiatives, there are some indications of a positive future for voluntary services in this rural community. The role of the school in awareness raising is illustrated by the fact that, last year, three SES cadets also joined the regional State Emergency Services group.

## Leadership issues

The extent and sustainability of school–community linkages in Margaret River is driven by the shared vision of school and community leadership, that educating and developing youth is a joint school–community responsibility and that there are many benefits to be gained from the symbiotic relationship between school and community. The relationship is facilitated by school and community leadership that is innovative and receptive to new ideas. Findings from this case study suggest that extensive linkages between school and community, and the way in which these linkages have been built and sustained, is dependent to a large extent upon the nature of school leadership.

### *The nature of school leadership*

Formal school leaders (Principal and senior administrative staff) have facilitated school–community linkages by creating a collaborative school culture based on trust and mutual respect. This is exemplified in the school's collaborative approach to problem solving, which one of the teachers described in the following way:

There's not much that one person does that other people don't know what's happening ... asking for help at school is not seen as a sign of weakness but it's seen as actually the norm. It's expected that if you're dealing with an issue then you network it as well and get as much input as you can.

This practice extends beyond the school, into the community. For example, the VET Coordinator and other staff involved in SWL consult regularly with employers in order to resolve issues and concerns in relation to students on work placement.

There are a number of groups involved in formal school leadership, including the School Management Group<sup>6</sup>, the Student Representative Council, the P & C, and the SWL committee, which is now in recess. Together, these groups represent the interests of students, parents, employers and other key community stakeholders in education. Relationships between these groups and school administration reflect mutual respect and a clear sense of shared vision. For example, the P & C member in the first extract describes the relationship between formal school leaders (school administration) and the P & C:

... the P & C is very closely aligned with the school administration, there's a lot of mutual respect, we don't always agree, we've had some very strong differences but we respect each other ... I think it comes down to a vision thing, there's no doubt that there is a sense of shared vision that the school is very important in this community and of course hence the reciprocal.

In the second extract, a school staff member, who does not occupy a formal leadership position within the school, examines the relationship between school administration and the School Management Group, which is characterised by respect for the ideas and input of all:

There doesn't seem to be in the school a real idea of hanging onto the institution ... if someone could put up a case for changing things or for a new idea then it's discussed and weighed up on its merit ... I see it as being a very democratic group in that whether the idea's put forward by the Principal or by a cleaner, it still gets the same amount of air time ... it's discussed with equal attention.

Mutual respect is at the heart of conflict resolution within the school. For example, the catalyst for greater parental and community participation in school governance (through membership of the School Management Group) was a conflict over what parents perceived as inadequate parental consultation regarding a proposed change to the school dress code. A representative of the P & C explains:

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<sup>6</sup> The School Management Group is similar to a School Council. It is comprised of ten school representatives and four community representatives, and makes decisions on school policies, procedures, budgets and capital works programs.



... out of that sense of frustration on our part there came a suggestion from one of our parents that maybe it would be a good idea if we could have a voice on the School Management Group to stop that sort of thing ... what was perhaps initially ... a point of difference became a catalyst for some very positive change.

The parent body subsequently gained two, and later four, representatives on the School Management Group. This increase in the extent of parental participation in school governance was facilitated by three factors: strong support from school leadership; timing in terms of an identified 'need' or reason for the parent body to assume a greater role in school governance, and the gradual implementation of the change, first through informal attendance by parent representatives at School Management Group meetings, later followed by formal participation and membership.

Significantly, the extent of parental and community participation in school governance bodies, and the relationship between these bodies (for example, the P & C President is also a member of the School Management Group), has been the catalyst for other school–community linkages:

I think that the School Management Group now is so inclusive of the P & C, having four of us sit on a body of what, 14, something like that, I think it augurs well for [the future of school–community linkages].

#### *Empowering others to undertake a leadership role*

By creating a collaborative school culture based on mutual respect, formal school leaders have empowered others within the school and community to undertake leadership roles. School staff and students have been empowered by formal school leadership to initiate and develop school–community linkages, and have received both managerial and operational support for their activities. The school's recycling program is a good example. In the first instance, the teacher was empowered to initiate the program, in direct response to environmental concerns regarding paper wastage within the school. He was supported in this initiative by formal school leadership. In turn, the teacher empowered students to undertake a leadership role in relation to recycling not only in the school, but also in helping to raise awareness of recycling issues within the wider community. As the school recycling program gained recognition and acceptance within the community, the teacher has been empowered to undertake a community leadership role in relation to recycling, by participating in the Council waste management steering committee which was responsible for recently implementing a community kerbside recycling program

The SES cadet scheme is an example of formal school leadership empowering school staff, community members and students to play an active leadership role in the community's voluntary services sector. It also illustrates the school and community's whole-of-town approach to educating youth. Support for the cadet scheme was provided by formal school leadership and by a government department. Because successful operation of the scheme involved the input of community members, the Cadet Coordinator (a school teacher) identified and set about developing relationships with parents and with individuals from the region's emergency services groups. As a result of fostering community ownership of the program, the Coordinator empowered individuals from emergency services groups to provide instruction to cadets, and empowered parents to provide leadership to the program in other areas (for example, camp organisation).

The third example of formal school leaders empowering others to undertake a leadership role relates to the process of initiating and developing structured workplace learning. This program was initiated by the VET Coordinator at the school, and supported at a managerial and operational level by the Principal. The availability of Federal Government funding was also important to the implementation of SWL. At an early stage, leadership of the program was moved out into the community, by forming an SWL management committee, which

included key community leaders such as the facilitator of the Business Enterprise Centre. The committee played an important role in recruiting employers to the program, and together with the VET Coordinator, in empowering local employers to play a role in youth development. As the VET Coordinator noted:

A lot of these people [employers involved in SWL] don't realise how good a teacher they are ... and see there is a lot of untapped energy out there, in the community.

Each of these examples illustrates leadership processes which focus on facilitating interactions and building relationships, both within the school and between school and community members. This process has provided others with the confidence and opportunities to undertake a leadership role within their own school and community. The basis of the leadership processes in each example is shared values between school and community regarding the importance of their youth and the need to foster youth development through a whole-of-town approach. What each of these programs has in common is that they are supported by formal school leadership at a managerial level, but also at an operational level, in terms of allocating additional administrative (non-student contact time) time to staff to set up and maintain these school–community linkages, and in terms of providing additional school administrative support as required.

### *Summary*

By forming strategic alliances with community leaders from a number of different areas, including the Shire Council, the business community, service clubs, and emergency services groups, the school has developed a number of innovative curriculum-based and non-curriculum-based initiatives based on a whole-of-town approach. In particular, formal school leaders have developed relationships with two key community individuals—the P & C President who runs his own professional practice, and the facilitator of the Business Development Centre (formerly the Business Enterprise Centre)—which have been central to the development of a number of school–community linkages. These individuals have used their positions of trust and respect within the community to build support for school initiatives.

It is an intentional leadership strategy that the school contributions featured in this case study have been 'pushed out' into the community. This strategy has seen some initiatives intentionally operated out of school hours (for example, SES cadets and SWL), as well as the planned participation of community members in the management, operation and/or funding of initiatives (for example, the SWL management committee, the use of community volunteers in the volunteer reading and SES cadets programs). By giving the community a sense of ownership of the programs, and by actively encouraging and supporting individuals to undertake leadership roles in school initiatives, formal school leaders have put in place procedures likely to ensure the development and sustainability of school–community linkages.

### **Other influencing factors**

#### *Within the school and community*

The media (local newspaper and radio station) play an important role in influencing the school–community relationship in Margaret River. Formal school leaders noted that good school–community relations revolved around building and maintaining a good reputation and a favourable perception of the school within the community, and that, to be effective, public relations building needed to be an ongoing task and not just restricted to reporting of one-off 'events' in the school calendar. Accordingly, the school has developed strong school–media relations, and the P & C President has an open invitation from the local newspaper to write a regular report on the school's activities:

... part of my role is ... to counter the occasional bit of negativity or the apathy towards the school, which people in all communities exhibit. They just don't realise what a

resource they have here and I think it is up to the school and the school community, of which I am a part, to make people realise some of the myriad programs that are going on at any one time ... and I'm very grateful to the local newspaper for giving me the opportunity to write ...

Not all media publicity of the school is positive. However, school leaders are careful to ensure that any misrepresentations or misperceptions of the school and its students within the media are quickly and publicly corrected.

The other key influencing factor which influences the school–community partnership is the ability and willingness of school and community members to seek and secure funding opportunities to develop new initiatives or expand existing ones. This is partly attributed to the background of community members, a number of whom have brought into the community well developed skills in lobbying, negotiation and tendering and grant application processes, as well as access to broad organisational networks within and external to the State. There is an ethos of innovation within the school and community, so opportunities to trial or pilot projects are actively sought. For example, the school was one of the first in the State to implement structured workplace learning, and to convene a community committee to manage the program. A number of interviewees acknowledged that the community was fortunate to have such a community human resource base to draw upon, and suggested the reason for this was because a number of skilled, professional people had relocated to Margaret River from Perth and elsewhere, for lifestyle reasons. Whilst the availability of human resources has been important to development within Margaret River, formal school and community leadership (discussed in the previous section) has played a central role in identifying, fostering and harnessing their skills and abilities for the benefit of the community.

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#### *Outside the school and community*

The decision to make Margaret River a senior high school influenced the nature and extent of school–community linkages. The presence in the school and community of senior students, and the need to provide appropriate curriculum options for them, stimulated greater school–community engagement. In at least one other site (Cooktown), the need to provide opportunities for senior students who had not previously been catered for by the school, was a catalyst for school–community interaction. Approval and funding for upgrading the high school to senior high school status ultimately came from the Western Australian Government. However, the decision to upgrade the school in 1995 was a direct result of a number of years of extensive school and community lobbying. For a community in a 'safe Liberal seat', there was no incentive for the Government to give high priority to substantial development within Margaret River. Before school and community joined forces to lobby for school redevelopment, the school had experienced some ten years of frustration of 'going through the right channels', only to find each year that school redevelopment plans had again 'dropped off the [government funding] list' in favour of other schools elsewhere in the State.

In this site, as for most of the other study sites, access to initial funding and external support was important in order to implement large-scale school–community linkages, including SWL and the cadet-in-high-schools program. For example, the Office of Youth Affairs in Western Australia provided funding and assistance in setting up the cadet scheme. Whilst government funding facilitated several key school–community initiatives, the driver in each case was the alignment of vision between funding body and school leadership. In particular, formal school leaders in Margaret River demonstrated a willingness to capitalise on opportunities provided by government policy and funding.

### **For the future**

As a vibrant community located in one of the fastest growing regions of Western Australia, Margaret River has much to look forward to in the future. Opportunities provided by the planned Centre of Wine Excellence, for example, include a university presence in Margaret

River and proposed links between the University, TAFE and the Margaret River Senior High School in the delivery and articulation of viticulture education. As the community continues to grow and attract business investors, opportunities for commercial property development and for the local building and construction, and associated industries, have increased significantly.

The innovative and forward-thinking approach of the community is very much reflected in Margaret River Senior High School, in which new opportunities to meet the needs of students and to increase the linkages between school and community are actively sought. If the school is to continue its role as a leader within its community, it will need to not only consolidate its linkages with the educational, business and local government sectors, but also continue to value the diversity of the community's population and the school's philosophy of inclusivity. To this end, there would seem to be further scope for the school to explore the possibility of extending its linkages with two community groups: the elderly and those representing lower socioeconomic groupings, including the unemployed. The volunteer reading program has proved an effective starting point for involvement of retired citizens in the school, but it would seem that retired citizens are still a largely untapped resource in Margaret River. Regarding the school's relationship with community members from lower socioeconomic groupings, it would seem that representatives from this group would benefit from support and active encouragement to take a greater role in school governance, in terms of membership of the P & C and the School Management Group. This would further enhance the decision making capabilities of the school, by ensuring more broad-based community representation.

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# Meander: Common ground uniting a community<sup>7</sup>

In 1991, Meander Primary School was threatened with closure by the State Government. Although educational grounds were cited as the reason for this, the reality was economic. The school, with its low student numbers and high-maintenance, National Trust classified historic buildings, had been left to run down. Far from accepting this decision, parents and staff rallied together to lobby politicians from all parties, and to produce a 50-page book, *Meander Primary School, An Excellent Small School*, to present to the Education Minister. The children wrote letters to the newspapers to save their school. The fight to save the school combined the dogged determination and 'do-it-yourself' attitude of the traditional farming community with the campaigning skills of the environmentally-active 'hippies'. In an overwhelming display of community action the school was saved, and has continued to grow in the last decade in terms of student numbers and reputation. While always focusing on the core activity of educating its children, Meander Primary School has also diversified by actively taking on a variety of other roles within the community. The school plays an important part in meeting community needs in areas as diverse as technology and communications, the Arts, the environment, and as a mediator building social cohesion.

## The site

Meander is a small village of 258 (ABS 1998) situated in the central north of Tasmania on the Meander River and nestled under the Great Western Tiers. It is 15 km from the rural centre of Deloraine (population 2168 (ABS 1998)), 30 km from Westbury (population 1280 (ABS 1998)) which is the administrative centre for the Meander Valley Council, and approximately 65 km from Launceston (population 70 256 (ABS 1999b)), Tasmania's second largest city. The Meander Valley Council covers an area of 3821 square kilometres with a population of 9991 (ABS 1998). Although it is currently the fourth fastest growing Local Government Area in Tasmania (ABS 1999a), growth is mainly in the regional centres. The rural section of the Local Government Area, including Meander, has experienced a small population decline.

Of the five case study sites, Census Data (ABS 1998) shows that the Meander region has the highest unemployment rate at 12.6 per cent. Meander is a diverse community comprising farmers, alternative lifestyleers, professional people and a small Indigenous population of 2.3 per cent (ABS 1999a). The region's sources of economic activity reflect the diversity of its population. Meander's main industries are agriculture and timber which were the mainstays of European settlement commencing in the late 1820s. The river's flood plains provide good soil for grazing beef cattle, sheep and for dairying and limited cropping. However, rural industry, as everywhere, is changing rapidly and producers are finding it hard to adapt:

You can't just bung a few sheep on a paddock and then sell lambs every now and then ... that's just not the way farmers are going to succeed any more.

The slopes of the Tiers and, more recently, timber plantations, have provided the raw product for an extensive timber industry now represented locally by a sawmiller and timber retailer

<sup>7</sup> This case study was written by Libby Prescott, Susan Johns, and Sue Kilpatrick, and appeared as Chapter 7 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) who funded this research. The final report, *More than an Education: Leadership for rural school-community partnerships*, was published in 2002. Co-authors Ms Libby Prescott and Dr Sue Kilpatrick from the University of Tasmania attest to the authorship of the case study as follows: Libby Prescott (90%), Susan Johns (5%), and Sue Kilpatrick (5%).

which is the major business employer in the town. Tourism and Arts and Crafts have lately played a greater cultural and economic role, with Deloraine becoming the centre of a thriving Arts and Craft community and an important tourist centre. This is partly attributable to the large influx into the Meander area of new settlers, 'hippies', 'greenies' or alternative lifestyles in the 1970s and 80s who moved onto cheap smallholdings which were too marginal to be commercially productive. This boost to the population of the area brought different skills bases with a strong emphasis on Music and the Arts, and different attitudes to the established industries, especially forestry operations. The public culmination of this movement was the annual Jackeys Marsh Forest Festival and the various protests (most recently the Mother Cummings campaign), which divided the community along environmental lines. As a consequence, there are a large number of active Landcare groups in the Meander Valley catchment with widely differing philosophies. The 'newcomers' have been joined more recently by professionals who want a rural lifestyle but who commute to Launceston or rely on the city for their income base. Ready access to Information Technology services in the region has facilitated this process.

## **The school**

Meander is the only site in the set of case studies where the sole public education provider is a primary school. Meander Primary School is situated in the centre of the village, which also consists of a small store, a hall, sports grounds, the timber supplier, several churches, and a number of scattered houses. It was established as West Meander School in 1891 with 19 pupils, at the request of residents. Gradually over the years, with the closure of other small schools including Jackeys Marsh, Montana and Golden Valley, Meander Primary acquired their buildings and students. The buildings have been classified by the National Trust, and provide an interesting and unified collection of classrooms, and a metaphor for the history of the school.

Meander Primary currently has 89 students (after a peak of 110 in 1998) from Kindergarten to Grade 6, eight teaching staff and five non-teaching staff. It is anticipated that this student population will be maintained into the foreseeable future. There is also a playgroup for pre-school children run by one of the ancillary staff. Post-primary, most students travel to Deloraine High School for Years 7 to 10 and to Launceston or Devonport for Years 11 and 12.

Meander Primary does not simply contribute to the community; it is the focal centre of the Meander community, the 'glue' holding together an otherwise divided community and building on the strengths of its diversity. As Meander has no pub or other regular social centre, the school has always played a vital part in the community as its informal social centre and, through the Parents and Friends (P & F), as its more formal social events coordinator. The school is the focus for activities such as the school fair, bush dances and concerts, as well as providing a drop-in centre for parents, a playgroup for younger children, and a venue for community meetings, all of which help overcome rural isolation. Recently the Fire Brigade approached the school to revive the Bonfire night fireworks display. As with many other initiatives, the Principal readily embraced the revival of this community tradition: '... they just brought it up and we said yeah let's do it'. Through these activities the school has played an important role in rebuilding social capital in a divided community. As one parent commented:

... we're all earnestly connected to the school because our kids go to the school ... they do the bushdances and all kinds of artistic stuff in here and it is a great way for people to actually get together on some issue that's not vexatious to them. So yeah the school is mostly the focal point for any of the getting together that does get done.

School and community facilities are shared to such an extent that there is barely a division between the two. The school hires or lends out a range of equipment making it what one

parent called a 'community resource hub'. It also makes use of the community hall, oval, basketball court and tennis court, working in partnership with the hall committee and Council to resurface the court, erect netball poles, and build a shelter shed. The establishment in 1998 of a Community Online Access Centre within the school has further embedded the school within the community, as well as bringing a wider circle of people into the school.

Fostering a 'family atmosphere of mutual support and trust for lifelong learning with respect and equity', and encouragement of 'strong parent support', are key points in the school vision statement. The following comment by a parent, on the family school atmosphere of Meander Primary, is typical:

... it's not like a school it's probably more like ... a family ... it's like (the children) are leaving one family and coming into another family. Yeah the kids are happy ... and I'm happy. I can walk in and out of the place, if I want to come in here and have a cup of tea. Even if I don't want to go into the classroom ... it just has that inviting, welcoming (atmosphere) and your participation, it's appreciated and wanted.

There is a tradition of lifelong connection with the school, as parents and grandparents take part in school activities. Some children may be the fourth or fifth generation to attend the school. Of the staff, 88 per cent live locally, many are also parents of current or past students, and 38 per cent are on their second assignment at the school, enhancing the family atmosphere. As the Principal noted:

The thing about this school compared to others is there is less bureaucracy, it's less conservative ... relationships are important and not so much the formal structures.

The fact that the staff have managed to retain the school's neutrality and promote tolerance of diversity has been praised by respondents from a variety of backgrounds, and explains the support for and success of the school in the local community. The following non-teaching staff member explains:

I'd say the school is probably the hub of the community at the moment, that it's ... the only thing that ... keeps everybody in contact and it's ... a neutral ground for everybody too ... There's no sides taken in any debating type of thing around the staff or anything like that. It's all neutral.

Policy initiatives, such as the students calling staff by first names and the absence of uniforms, creates an egalitarian atmosphere and a sense of equality and responsibility in the students. Amongst students there is little evidence of sexism or ageism. There were numerous comments from students, parents and staff about the ability of children to mix freely in the school. This is cultivated by staff who try to cross traditional gender role boundaries themselves, for example, by males doing dishes at school functions, as models for the children and ultimately for the community. This has also had positive spin-offs in breaking down the barriers between school and community.

There has been a conscious effort to incorporate Aboriginal culture in the school's programs. Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness (ASSPA) funding was used to aid Indigenous students but has intentionally been allowed to lapse over the last few years, as it is considered superfluous and a potential source of division and exploitation.

Meander Primary School has what some have described as a progressive and relatively stable School Council, being one of the first in Tasmania to have a parent on the staff selection panel. The Council comprises four school staff (including the Principal), two parent members representing the whole parent body, and two P & F representatives. The workings of the School Council reflect equality and inclusiveness, and the relationship between the Council and Principal is based on openness, trust and respect, as the following parent member of the School Council explains:

(The School Council) has worked really well in this school because ... there's a heap of transparencies, nothing's hidden, everything was available and (the Principal) was easy to work with, and values people's opinions and experiences, so there wasn't ... a power hierarchy in the School Council, so if you come to a meeting, it's very round table and everyone has equal powers.

## **How does the school contribute to the community?**

### **The school as a technology and communications centre**

In January 1998, the Meander Community Online Access Centre was set up in what had, up to then, been the Principal's office in the former residence at Meander Primary School. Overall, the timing of the initiative was good, as the Education Department was encouraging the development of technology in schools. However, the story of the Online Access Centre is far more than one of just being in the right place at the right time. It is one of a close, reciprocal partnership between school and community, and of enthusiastic and committed leadership dedicated to meeting the needs of a small rural community. The key mover was a resident and parent with IT skills. He was relief-teaching at Meander Primary when the opportunity arose for the establishment of a second Online Centre in conjunction with the Deloraine Online Centre at the Deloraine Library. He had become aware of a lack of facilities for factual research information at the local and school libraries in Deloraine.

Initial funding for the project came from the Regional Telecommunications Development Fund, a State Government initiative based on a Canadian model, which provided the hardware (three computers, a scanner and a printer) and ISD line, but no paid staff. In September 1998 the initiator of the Centre was employed as part-time coordinator, enabling him to be paid for the work he had previously been doing voluntarily. His position was funded by the Education Networks Australia (EdNA) Community Access to IT Through Schools Pilot Project.

As the initiator was also chair of the School Council, his credibility within that group and his enthusiasm for the project were key factors in securing staff and parental support for the Centre. The Principal enthusiastically gave practical support to the idea, offering the use of his office:

... well the key mover was [name] ... and it was at the time when the previous Government were looking at their directions and looking at [IT] and [the initiator] could see the value in that because he had experience with the State Library and at the University and so on, was relatively new to the area and ... he prepared this whole submission about why we should do it and I said well do it, you don't have to convince me, let's do it.

The management committee comprises a mix of community, parent and staff members covering a range of business, education, Arts, farming and conservation interests. In addition to accommodation, heating, lighting, power and telecommunications, the school provides administrative support and some staff support for the Centre, and subsidises expendable items like printer paper and cartridges—in-kind support estimated by the coordinator to be worth \$45–50 000 pa to the Centre.

The Online Centre, as the first school-based centre in Tasmania, has become a source of pride for the community. The benefits to the community and school of having such a centre are manifold. The introduction of the GST has made it essential for farmers and other rural



businesses to develop computer skills to cope with the additional record keeping required.<sup>8</sup> The Centre has brought into the school people who would not otherwise have contemplated accessing computers, and given them skills to cope with change and to use it to their benefit. It has achieved this by providing regular training sessions and 24-hour/seven day a week access, with flexible backup support from the coordinator:

I think the Access Centre ... actually helped people come to something new and different at their own pace and at their own time ... and I think what's happening now is that, when something else new comes along the walls are still going up but they're a bit lower each time, because they've already faced a completely new thing and they've handled it all right.

It is estimated that 60 per cent of parents have been through a training session at the Centre since it opened, and a number have been involved on the management committee. There has been a rapid increase in the community use of the facilities for all aspects of computer and Internet use since its inception, with 145 registered users in May 1999 (MCAC 1999). Initially, along with the 'new settlers', it was the female partners from farm businesses who seized the opportunity to learn the skills, as traditionally they are the people who have kept the books and paid the accounts (MCAC 1999). Gradually the male partners from farm businesses began to use the Online Access Centre. Some, like the male agricultural contractor described by his wife in the following extract, had a long-standing dislike of school because of their own childhood experiences. Having the Online Centre so readily accessible has helped such people overcome this barrier, as one parent explains:

[The course] covers ... anything to do with computers ... It goes from 9 in the morning till 3 in the afternoon, so basically they are back at school, one day per week. So yeah he's really enjoying it and he's someone who hated school anyway, hardly ever went, and he's having a ball so that's good.

To publicise the Centre, and to encourage and support community members to feel comfortable entering the school and using the Online Access Centre, the school has offered Access Centre Open Days, school tours with a cup of tea on election polling days, and a major IT Expo.

Several local businesses have now embraced the technology to market products such as agricultural inventions or stud cattle in a web site (MCAC 1999), or to research agricultural and landcare methods. Some have gone on to buy their own computers, while still calling on the coordinator for technical support should a problem arise.

There is a regular homework group for secondary students, and other community members have used the facility to undertake secondary or tertiary studies by distance education. One secondary student noted that the practical limitations of solar power at home make use of the Centre essential. For a Bachelor of Nursing student, the Centre saved her long trips to Launceston, gave her computer training, affordable Internet access, a pleasant and private workplace available at all hours, fitting in with her shift work, and with IT and office backup when needed. With this support she gained her degree and was accepted into the Graduate Program:

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<sup>8</sup> The ABS survey *Household Use of IT, Australia, 1999* (Cat. No. 8146.0) showed that in March 1999, Tasmania had the lowest household use of computers (41%) and the Internet (18%) of all States and Territories. By comparison at the same time the ABS survey *Use of IT on Farms, Australia* (Cat. No. 8150.0) showed Tasmania had the highest percentage of farms using the Internet (21.7%), the highest increase (March 98-99) in farms (EVAO > \$5,000) using a computer (a 35.9% increase to 48.7% users) and the second highest increase in farms using the Internet (76.3% increase) of all States and Territories.

Yeah I just think if I hadn't stumbled on to it, if you like, my time at Uni would have been a lot more stressful, so by using it has alleviated a lot of the stress. Because ... of the equipment that is there, everything ... flowed a lot easier, it made my life a lot easier.

With the Online Access Centre so reliant on the input and enthusiasm of one person, the coordinator, there could be some concern about its ongoing viability should that person move on. With that in mind, the coordinator commented on the need for procedures to be put in place to ensure the Centre's future:

If you do that it fails, you fail ... as a leader if you set something up, and it just falls to bits when you go. You've got to set it up so that it will continue ... and I think getting it under the wing of the school is the way to do that. Personnel will change, interests will change but as long as it's always there, there's money coming in to support it, then the school will look after it.

### **The school as an environment centre**

There are three separate Landcare groups in the Meander area. Each group has a different and often deeply opposed philosophical base, but all focus on the major problem areas of rivercare, weed control, and land use practices. Despite their differences, all groups have shared resources and skills with the school to achieve their objectives. Students and Landcare groups have been involved with water testing, seed collecting, tree raising and planting in community areas such as the school grounds, fire station, recycling area and river banks, recycling waste at school incorporating a worm farm, and raising biological control agents such as dung beetles for release on farms.

As well as the direct environmental benefits to the community, the greater awareness of their immediate environment and of alternative ways of looking at land management issues is fed by the students back to their families. Some Landcare meetings are held at the school, Landcare groups use the Online Access Centre to do research, inform the public through web sites or use digital mapping software to check on catchment management practices, and use the glasshouse to raise seedlings. This enables the school to use the local environment as curriculum and to broaden the students' range of contacts. As one older Landcare member noted:

... the school needs to have people coming in from outside with this expertise because you can't have your school ... like it used to be when I was a kid, the four walls, you and the teacher and the teacher was like a God ... The teacher ... brings the world to you really, and even though it's just down the road, you know, you're opening up the school. I think that's why it's important and that's what you get out of it.

One project illustrates the role of the school in breaking down the divisions within the community and building trust. One Landcare group acquired funding for a glasshouse to be used for raising tree seedlings for regeneration and erosion control. The glasshouse sat neglected on private land until a member of the Landcare group decided to contact the school to see if it could be of any use there. As with other initiatives, the Principal immediately welcomed the idea and facilitated its implementation, as the Landcare representative explains:

I just finally decided to just write a letter and [the Principal] you know wrote straight back and rang me up and said sure you know do it. And then the school laid the slab down there and some of the parents who are also in the other Landcare group ... were there as well so it was a real community thing.

Having the school as a community environmental resource has brought a wider range of people into the school. It has helped to foster intergenerational trust between older community members and those without direct connections with the school, as they develop common interests with the students. It has also helped to break down the barriers between different community groups by building trust through a common interest on common ground.

### **The school as a centre for the Arts**

The Meander community is renowned for its focus on visual and performing arts. Meander Primary has cultivated this abundant local skills base to the benefit of the school and community, without restricting involvement to those with formal teacher training. Priorities for each year's curriculum focus are assessed by an annual questionnaire to parents and are adjusted to suit the interests and needs of the student cohort at that particular time. If parents have a special skill or interest then an idea may be put formally through the School Council, or informally to the Principal, and the project initiated.

The school has run a formal artist-in-residence project for a number of years. This was initiated by the current Principal who saw the talent of local artists, some of whom were parents, as a potential curriculum resource. For some years the school had run a weekly arts and crafts afternoon allowing for participation from the community. In 1999, this was revived and broadened as parents, teachers and community members with particular areas of expertise lobbied the School Council to have it reintroduced to redress the perceived imbalance toward 'sports and computers'. Again the school was the centre of a project that broke down the divide between the two groups, or as one teacher says, it helped by 'breaking down that them and us attitude'.

Other examples of the school fostering the Arts include the employment of local musicians to teach as part of the curriculum, and the use of school facilities by these musicians for private tuition during school time, to help parents and children overcome the difficulty of having to travel large distances for tuition. On the basis of Meander Primary School's reputation both within Tasmania and nationally, and as a result of publicity gained through the school's web page, the ABC asked Meander Primary choir to take part in its Millennium New Year's Eve program to be transmitted worldwide. A choir organised by a musician parent and a staff member sang a song composed by the students.

In addition, the school has for some years had a strong dramatic focus, and together with talented local community members, has written, produced and performed in plays for a variety of audiences and in a variety of venues. A community member explains:

That's one of the real positives of the school and the community is that one, they've got the guts and the creativity to take those projects on and two, when they do, there is the support there and the skill there to help them make it work.

In 1991, the Principal at the time initiated the writing and publication of a community history to celebrate the school's centenary. There are now plans to publish it on the Internet through the Online Centre. The skills learned and the pride instilled as school and community worked together on this project went far beyond the boundaries of the school. This activity, like so many other school-initiated activities, broke down the barriers and brought the people together through a greater understanding of the community's history.

For the children, participation in these activities has given them enormous self-confidence, which has carried through to future activities in the wider community. For some of the artists and community members involved, it has also given them confidence to take their skills into the broader community because they are given the freedom to work independently with a receptive group of children. As the Principal noted about the artists involved 'they tend to look at us as the guinea pigs and they try out things here and then ... more globally'. From these projects, the community gains in pride in its achievements and a cultural richness that makes life richer for all.

## **Discussion**

### **Nature and extent of the school's contribution to the community**

The examples discussed above illustrate the many and varied ways that a small primary school can contribute extensively to the material, social and cultural wellbeing of a rural community. The Online Access Centre provides education in information technology and Internet use for community members of all ages and skill levels. Skills gained are used for business (agricultural and other), career, academic and personal development. The school's Arts programs provide cultural enrichment for the community and an opportunity for local artists to try out and develop their skills before taking them out to a wider audience. Environmental programs provide education, increased awareness and the facilities to implement activities which protect and improve the quality of the natural and agricultural rural environment. As a community resource hub the school provides these and other facilities and resources that would not otherwise be available for the use of the general community. Socially, through fairs, dances, performances and day-to-day activities the school is the common meeting place for members of a diverse group of people with widely differing and sometimes conflicting views. As such, it has built trust, mutual understanding and respect for others. Without the school, there would be no 'community' as such at Meander, as one long-term resident and member of staff explains:

... hypothetically I couldn't even visualise (Meander) without the school ... I'd say that the school is the hub of the whole community ...

### **Leadership issues: Key players and their roles**

The conscious blurring of the divide between school and community has served to embed Meander Primary School into the community. This case study illustrates how the level and extent of community involvement in school activities is influenced by the open and democratic nature of leadership processes in the school. In particular, it illustrates the importance of the Principal's role in creating and maintaining an atmosphere of openness, inclusiveness and equality.

Two key factors in relation to school leadership have played, and continue to play, an important role in strengthening the school-community partnership: the Principal's accessibility to all, and the receptiveness of the Principal and school staff to new ideas. In a school in which organisational structure is characterised by relative informality and equality rather than strict formality and hierarchy, one of the benefits for community members is the accessibility of the Principal, either at school or after school hours, either informally or formally through organised meetings. The open door policy of the school, which encourages and welcomes all community members, facilitates accessibility not only to the Principal but to other staff members as well. Once community members have taken the first step through the door, they can be assured that their ideas will be listened to.

This receptiveness to new ideas extends beyond the Principal, to the school community in general. If community members have an idea or project in mind and need support for it, they turn automatically to the school first. This is illustrated in the planning of the Online Access Centre, which would have been unlikely to come to fruition without strong support from the Principal, School Council and, after some discussion, from school staff. The willingness of the school to try out new ideas by working in close partnership with community members extends far beyond the use of physical facilities, to the development of ideas about curriculum and the role of the school in the community. It also extends to a strongly held belief that learning is a reciprocal relationship between individuals and between school and community, and that the role of teacher is not confined to those people with the 'bit of paper'. This is illustrated in the extensive Arts program offered through the school in partnership with talented local artists and craftspeople, which provides a wide range of benefits to children and adults, as well as to the whole community.

Coupled with the receptiveness of the school to new ideas and its willingness to foster leadership potential amongst children and community members, is the presence in the community of a number of key people with varied interests who are able to see, create or facilitate opportunities for school and community to work together. In terms of initiating leadership within the community, Meander is rich. The influx of 'new settlers' into Meander has been a key part of bringing new ideas and ways of doing things into the community. In a number of cases, these people have played a key role in initiating projects of benefit to both school and community, such as the Online Access Centre, and the development of close links between the school and the various environmental groups in the region. In addition, a number of these people represent the community on the School Council. What these people have in common is their level of enthusiasm, willingness to utilise their skills and knowledge for the good of the community, and extensive links and networks both within and outside the community. In many cases, these people have multiple and overlapping roles within the school and community. For example, the initiator and coordinator of the Online Access Centre has school links (teacher and parent), local community links (President of the School Council, hobby farmer, environmental group member), and wider external links (State Library and University connections). These multiple links allow the coordinator to further strengthen the partnership between school and community. In addition, because of his multiple roles he has credibility within a number of community groups, which enables him to play a key role in mediating the change process in this small rural community.

In a community which is not used to 'being told what to do' by those from outside, not surprisingly the School Council plays an important role in determining the best way to assess and meet the needs of its children. This is illustrated, for example, in the School Council calling for an increased focus on the Arts in order to balance what was perceived to be an imbalance in the curriculum in favour of sports and computing. The Principal and staff can also be confident that they have the tacit support of the local community for policy initiatives they take, because of the mutual and reciprocal trust built up over the years:

I suppose that's one of the roles I have to do in the leadership role is to sort out all the rubbish and I tend to do that and say well you know I can tell you all about this and we can go through that process or you can rely on me as the educational leader to say well you know in my professional opinion I think we ought to be focussing on this area and not so much on this. And you know if my judgement is found to be wanting in the future then I'll accept responsibility for that. And I think people are quite happy with that.

The Principal actively encourages this shared leadership of the school by the community. The result, as illustrated in this case study, is a close-knit school which both supports, and in turn is supported by, its community.

## **Other influencing factors**

### *Within the school and community*

Aside from the leadership issues in relation to school and community, there are a number of other factors which influence the nature and extent of Meander Primary School's contributions to the community. This section will discuss two of these factors, which were recurring themes in many of the interviews: the physical school infrastructure, and the role of conflict within the community.

The imaginative use of the school's unique physical infrastructure, its historic collection of school buildings, has served to build community social capital along with a strong feeling of continuity and sense of the past. Some years ago when the District Superintendent wanted to remove these buildings and replace them with a low-maintenance structure, the Principal at the time, as a member of the National Trust, had the buildings listed by that body. The school community pulled together to put time and money into restoring the old buildings which have since become the pride of the community and a home for the Online Access Centre.

The role of conflict has been pivotal in the Meander community. Negative outcomes are an ongoing bitterness and easily revived core division in the community, that have been hard for people to overcome in their day-to-day relationships with one another. Nevertheless, the conflict has had some surprising positive outcomes for the school and the community. For the school, the conscious and intentional policy of building tolerance of diversity and breaking down prejudice has created for the school and staff a position of high esteem, respect and active support from all groups in the community. The general hope expressed by many respondents is that the barriers in the community will be broken down by the children, through their relationships with one another.

There is also a belief that diversity in the community, and the school's role in fostering tolerance of this diversity, has had the positive effect of forcing people to assess their accepted set of beliefs, broadening people's outlook and experiences, and making Meander a culturally richer community: This belief is typified by the following comment from a community member:

I have come to the view that there are positives in that, in that I think that conflict causes debate and although not everybody is happy with the outcome of that debate, at least it gets people talking and lets them understand how other people think or in fact quite often how other people don't think, challenges them to come to terms with that I suppose.

#### *Outside the control of the school and community*

Three issues largely outside the direct control of the school and community are size of the school and community, availability and prudent use of financial resources, and the impact of government policies. Each has had an effect on the partnership between school and community.

Many of those interviewed noted that the smallness of the school allowed it to enjoy a level of informality in terms of organisational structure and interpersonal relationships between students and staff, and between staff and community members, that would not be possible in a larger school. In a small school, roles are not strictly defined and frequently overlap. This gives the Principal and staff a broader view and different perspective of the school and community, and the community of them, and assists in breaking down barriers. However, smallness of the school and community can also be a problem. A concern in a number of small rural communities, including Meander, is that of an insufficient population base to meet the community's leadership needs. Despite the fact that the Meander Primary School has played a major role in empowering others to participate in the leadership process, the community itself relies on a very small number of people to undertake these roles. When key leaders leave the community it is not always easy to fill the gap.

This case study illustrates how the school and its leadership might play a vital role in the sustainability of certain community initiatives. The case of the Online Access Centre is a good illustration of this. The future of the Centre depends on both adequate financial resources as well as continued leadership. It has been suggested that the future of the Centre would be assured if the school took over running of the Centre while maintaining a management committee to retain the community link. By operating the Centre through the administrative structure of the school, it would be buffered against changing personnel, and the need to constantly recruit others to management and leadership positions. In addition, there are financial gains to be made if the resources of the Online Access Centre and the school are shared. Sharing resources in this way makes financial sense as, for example, the Centre currently pays public liability insurance for the room it uses, whereas under the proposed arrangement, the school's own insurance would cover this cost.

The third influencing factor is that of government policy decisions, which can have varying effects on schools, both supportive and undermining, and not necessarily those intended by the policy makers. For example, the threatened closure of Meander Primary School under the

CRESAP's Final Report (CRESAP 1990) galvanised and unified the community and resulted in the survival and resurgence of the school. In addition, many people interviewed in Meander noted how their school and community had on a number of occasions pre-empted policy by putting in practice a variety of initiatives designed to increase school–community involvement. Meander Primary School had a policy of regularly reviewing school–community opinion in relation to the school's educational effectiveness some years before ASSR (Assisted School Self Review: a method for schools to formally assess their effectiveness) was introduced by the State Education Department. The Meander Online Access Centre was set up in the school, preempting the State Government's *Learning Together* document (Department of Education Tasmania 2001), which outlined initiatives in relation to forging stronger partnerships between school and community, facilitating lifelong learning, and developing world-class facilities for online learning.

For Meander, there were both positive and negative outcomes from the introduction of the School Council policy. What the policy did was to formalise an already strong partnership between school and community, and to further empower parents and community members. On a negative note, however, some considered that the mandated development of the School Council at Meander Primary School has been at the expense of the P & F, and has had the effect of disempowering certain groups within the community. Regarding the implementation of the ASSR policy at Meander Primary School, many of those interviewed felt that the negative outcomes outweighed the benefits for their school, in terms of the frustration felt at the bureaucratisation of a process that was already operating effectively within the school, and that offered little flexibility or opportunity for customisation to meet the school's particular needs.

## For the future

Working from a basic need ten years ago to save a tiny country school, the community of Meander has built, through that school, a hub that provides them with a technology centre for lifelong learning, an arts centre, an environmental resource, and a social focus. This process has firmly embedded the school within the community, so that boundaries between the two have blurred. It has achieved this through the energetic and open leadership style of key people in the community, particularly the current Principal, and by consciously building tolerance against a background of environmental conflict which may have destroyed another community. Despite the reliance on a group of key people as initiators of ideas, this process of empowering others provides leadership opportunities for a broad range of community members, and for the development of shared vision and group leadership. As a result of this process, the programs and structures developed have a far greater chance of continuing when key people move out of their roles or leave the community. One of the teachers explains:

I think there are enough people in the community now from ... whatever background, [who] feel that we can do stuff through our kids, we can do stuff through the school and I don't think even if [the current Principal] went and maybe, you know the next Principal wasn't quite so accommodating ... I think those people will still find a way of coming together through their kids.

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# Walla Walla: Contributing to multiple communities<sup>9</sup>

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St Paul's College is a Lutheran Church boarding school located in a small rural town. The existence of a church community and an extensive family community, that includes boarders from interstate and overseas, singles this school and its community out from the other, geographic, communities in the study. Leadership at St Paul's had been restructured two and a half years before our visit. A new Board, appointed by the Lutheran Church, had selected a new Principal. The restructuring of the school management has resulted in the school looking outward to its multiple communities; rural, local, church and family. The school is adaptable and uses lateral thinking in its contributions to its diverse communities. The school farm's White Suffolk sheep stud and equine centre, nationally recognised for their excellence, provide learning opportunities for the rural community as well as students, with field days and a wool-classing course held on the farm. An ambitious scheme is bringing local councils and churches together to provide youth workers in the communities around Walla Walla, supported and mentored by the Pastor of St Paul's College. The boarders enrich the life of the small town through their membership of community sporting teams and the international cultural experiences they bring. This private school, which had struggled to survive in a small rural community geographically distant from many of the families whose children it educates, is now viable largely because it is an integral part of its multiple communities. Contributions flow between the school and its communities. The ability of the school's leaders (those in formal leadership positions and other, non-formal leaders) to match the needs of the communities, with their outwardly-focused contributions, is at the heart of its success.

## The site

Walla Walla is a small community of 606 people (ABS 1998) located approximately 45 km north of Albury in New South Wales, in the Culcairn Shire. The population of Walla Walla, like that of the Shire in general, is static. This site has the lowest rate of mobility of the five case study sites, with 61 per cent of the population enumerated at the same address in both the 1991 and 1996 Censuses (ABS 1996).

Walla Walla was settled in 1869 largely by German farmers who moved from the Barossa Valley in South Australia. Since settlement, Walla Walla has had a strong and active Lutheran Church community; one of the oldest buildings in the township is the Zion Lutheran Church (c. 1879), which seats 700 people. While the Lutheran population in the region has now decreased, the Lutheran community maintains and is keen to increase its links with nearby St Paul's College. St Paul's is one of the two largest employers in Walla Walla, the other being a manufacturer of metal products for the rural industry.

Agriculture was, and still is, a key source of income and employment in the region; main rural industries in the area include sheep, cereals and cattle, although in recent years there has been some diversification into canola and lupins. With its farm machinery and engineering works, Walla Walla is a service town to the outlying agricultural areas. The region has been

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<sup>9</sup> This case study was written by Sue Kilpatrick and Susan Johns, and appeared as Chapter 8 of the final report to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) who funded this research. The final report, *More than an Education: Leadership for rural school-community partnerships*, was published in 2002. Co-author Dr Sue Kilpatrick from the University of Tasmania attests to the authorship of the case study as follows: Sue Kilpatrick (90%) and Susan Johns (10%).

significantly affected by drought and the slump in traditional rural markets, particularly sheep, and a number of rural families are feeling the economic strain. However, not all residents are involved in agriculture or related industries. Because of its relaxed lifestyle, safe environment and relatively low Shire Council rates, a number of people live in Walla Walla but commute to Albury each day for work.

The Walla Walla community is described by locals as caring and close-knit. It boasts a relatively large number of sporting clubs, and much community interaction centres around sport. There is also an active historical society. In keeping with its German background, the community hosts a heritage festival in November each year, which attracts wide ranging support from all community groups.

## **The schools**

Walla Walla has two schools: Walla Walla Primary School (a state school), and St Paul's College. St Paul's College, the focal school for this study, is a Lutheran Church co-educational boarding school. Almost half the students are from Lutheran families. It has an enrolment of approximately 240 students, and because of its reputation and its niche market course offerings in agriculture and Horsemastership studies, attracts students from other states and overseas. The local community, from which many of the 160 day students and some boarders are drawn, extends from Wagga Wagga in the north, to Wodonga over the Victorian border in the south, to Holbrook and Tallangatta in the east, to Yarrawonga in the west. The school community includes families from the Northern Territory, ACT, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea whose children board at the school.

Historically, the school has enjoyed a good relationship with its local community, although during the early to mid-1990s as enrolments declined and the school faced possible closure, the school's relationship with the community weakened as the school turned inward and disengaged from many activities in the local community. Following a school restructure and the appointment of a new Principal in 1998, St Paul's has embarked on a series of initiatives which focus on rebuilding and strengthening the relationship between the school and the wider community.

The links between the school, the immediate Lutheran community, and the Lutheran church are many: the school's Pastor works closely with pastors in Walla Walla and surrounding communities; staff members involve themselves in the local congregation and lead Bible Studies; the school chapel and auditorium are used for regular Sunday worship, and a youth intern based at St Paul's works with the local pastor in providing pastoral care for the youth of Walla Walla. In addition, St Paul's has recently been established as a Lutheran youth intern centre for the region.

The introduction of a VET-in-schools program in 1998-99, in areas such as Hospitality, Information Technology, Furnishings, and Horsemastership, as well as the study of Agriculture as part of the school curriculum, have forged linkages between the school and industry and business sectors in Walla Walla and surrounding areas. A feature of the VET program is the sourcing of courses from three accreditation systems: the New South Wales VET-in-schools TAFE-based program, TAFE in Victoria, and the Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales which is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

In keeping with its strong rural focus, St Paul's has a school farm, which is run as a business enterprise, specialising in the breeding of White Suffolk sheep, as well as cattle production, and trialling and production of pasture and crops. The school is at present negotiating with the Shire Council to use discharge water from the area on the school farm. The success St Paul's has had with sheep and cattle breeding and showing, in particular, continues to bring recognition to the whole community.

As one of the biggest employers in the area, St Paul's contributes significantly to the economy of the community, with a policy of buying locally wherever practical. Its facilities and equipment are used by a variety of community groups. Organisations external to the community, such as the Riverina Institute of TAFE, also use the school facilities to provide evening courses for both adults and students in areas relevant to community needs such as Information Technology and Wool Classing. A number of St Paul's students and staff are involved in community sporting groups and have links with local service clubs. There is both parental and wider community involvement in St Paul's through the Parents and Friends (P & F), largely a fundraising body, and through the Board of Management, which has decision-making powers in respect of the school's administration. In addition, St Paul's and the Walla Walla Primary School have developed a mutually beneficial relationship, exchanging ideas, resources and expertise where possible, and collaborating in the presentation of cultural and other activities. Because Walla Walla does not have a public library, future plans include opening the library at St Paul's to the wider community.

The existence of a church community and an extensive family community that includes boarders from interstate and overseas, singles this school and its community out from the other, geographic, communities in the study. The school's participation in the rural, agricultural community through its school farm adds another dimension to the concept of community for St Paul's College.

## **Contributions to multiple communities**

The recent rejuvenation of St Paul's College and its move to an outward-looking stance toward its multiple communities follows a period of declining enrolments. Contributions to each of its four communities—rural, local, church and family—form part of the school's strategy for viability and growth. The following sections describe some of the school's contributions according to the community that is the principal beneficiary, although it must be acknowledged that the communities partially overlap. Many families live in the local community and/or are engaged in rural enterprises. The church community includes the local Lutheran community as well as Lutheran families from other parts of Australia and as far away as Malaysia. The overlapping nature of the communities means St Paul's can act as a conduit for members of one community (e.g. the national Church community) to aid the development of another of its communities (e.g. the local Walla Walla community), as in the second local community example discussed below. The leader(s) involved in each contribution discussed below are highlighted, along with factors that influenced the leadership process.

### **Rural community**

The equine centre and school farm at St Paul's benefits the rural community in a number of ways. Agriculture and equine studies fill a niche market in the local and wider rural communities for school studies. The equine centre and school farm are regarded as sources of expertise and post-school learning for the rural community, and the school farm models excellence in agricultural practice.

#### *Equine centre*

Many of the boarders have been attracted by the long-established equine program: boarders are able to bring their own horses to the school. The school has a formal VET course in Horsemastership that is accredited by Wangaratta TAFE in Victoria, although St Paul's is in New South Wales. The school sought out an accrediting institution (Registered Training Organisation) which is highly regarded to match the standard of excellence achieved by the equine course at St Paul's. The TAFE system recognised the relevance and standard of the Horsemastership course that had been developed by the Equine Studies teacher, as the VET Coordinator explains:

[Wangaratta TAFE] were happy to allow us to deliver that course after checking out [Equine Teacher]'s experience and qualifications, checked our facilities and felt that the course that she was offering here called Horsemastership, was very close to their Certificate II course ... and they were happy to accredit us.

The Equine Studies teacher is an old scholar of the school and has strong links to the local community through her family who are active in community and church groups.

I'm seen as a local person who is pretty approachable, I get a lot of people coming in and just dropping in and asking questions about horses or things. Or coming to stables to get manure, and I'll give that to them free for their community area projects and the church and things like that.

She is active in horse-related events and activities outside the local area and acts as a link between the local and national equine communities. Through her external networks she secures work placements for Horsemastership students with universities that have equine studies courses and with the teams supporting World Cup qualifying events.

It is just a long association of people and contacts, I suppose just knowing who to go to.

Despite the financial cutbacks at St Paul's, the equine centre has received some extra resources, with a farm assistant available to help with fencing and urgent repairs. This resource, much appreciated by the Equine Studies teacher, is tangible evidence from the formal school leadership of their support for the teacher's efforts.

### *School farm*

The agriculture curriculum introduces new ideas to the farming community and stimulates discussion, as the Agriculture teacher explains:

Through agriculture we do have a lot of interaction with the community, through quite a few students coming off farms here ... and just the interaction of ideas and what, I know a lot of things I talk about in the classroom, because it is agriculture I suppose ... stimulates a lot of discussion at home. Some very interesting ones [ideas] come back, some parents think I'm pushing new ideas and different things, and I suppose I am in some areas.

The following Rural Committee member explains that deliberate efforts are made not only to interact with the rural community, but also to provide learning experiences through field days on pastures and livestock:

We [the Rural Committee] were able to look at then reaching out into the community a little bit too, that the College farm could offer something for the community ... things like Merino Wether Trials ... that we ran here so that the students all benefited but also the community.

A wool-classing course hosted for Riverina TAFE in the wool shed at St Paul's, which typically has 80 per cent community members and 20 per cent school students in the class, delivers opportunities and benefits to the local rural community. The following local farmer participated in the course:

I've been a farmer now for 20 years without a wool classer's certificate and because St Paul's this year offered the course to be run closer to where I live I've decided to complete that course and because it is a profession.

The Agriculture teacher, who is also the farm manager, takes a leadership role not only in the agricultural curriculum and running the farm, but also in the farming community at a national level, where the White Suffolk sheep stud that he has developed is one of the leading studs in the country. This farmer explains the high regard in which the school agricultural enterprise is held:

R: The College farm and their stud enterprise, they are taking some of their entries to shows as exhibits, like even as far as the Sydney Show, so they are getting recognised

...

I: So you hear about that out there in the farming community?

R: Yeah. I think that's great that we have people, like [name] he's the Ag Master here and I think it's great that they can get that far.

As well as building a nationally recognised agriculture enterprise, the Agriculture teacher has secured sponsorship for the school farm from large commercial companies. He is an unassuming leader who integrates excellence in teaching with providing learning opportunities for the local rural community and leadership in the national rural community with the sheep stud. He empowers the parents who are members of the Rural Committee to make informed decisions that may depart from the established wisdom of the district.

The Principal recognises and supports the initiatives of the Agriculture teacher, including building external networks and links with commercial agricultural suppliers:

... foreign industries particularly, things like [name of seed company] have been a very big supporter of us for supplying seed tests and so forth. We've got ag machinery places nibbling at us now, we've also got large studs nibbling at us now ... It's all down to [Agriculture teacher] the main inspiration behind it, [he] just likes to take the ball and run with it, so it means it's good to be given a really good run.

The contributions of the school farm and equine centre to the rural community are expertise, learning opportunities and the school's national standing in sheep breeding. The contributions are possible because of the physical resource base and employment provided by the school and the two teachers' membership of the national rural community. The possible contributions are operationalised by the two teachers' leadership actions, and are supported by the Board of Management in giving extra resources, and by the Principal who endorses the teachers' vision for the equine centre and school farm and their programs.

### **Local community**

The school makes many contributions to the well-being of the local community, defined as extending from Wagga Wagga in the north, to Wodonga over the Victorian border in the south, to Holbrook and Tallangatta in the east, to Yarrawonga in the west. The kitchen prepares the food for Meals on Wheels, students do charity work, the school newsletter performs an important communication function in a community without its own newspaper, and the physical resources of the school are used by local groups and the primary school. The school staff members have skills in organisation and working with people that are used in the community as well as at school. The following student comments:

I suppose the teachers that work here put a lot back into the community like the [names of teacher couple]. Like he's with the church ... [name] runs a lot of sport, tennis and [names] they run a lot of canoeing ...

In what follows, the contributions of two leaders, one a student and the other the Pastor, are highlighted.

#### *The netball club*

The boarders are a resource that the community draws on for sporting teams. Several respondents noted that the range and standard of sport in the community would be reduced without the boarders. The school has a policy of not fielding its own teams so that boarders meet and interact with people outside the school. One of the boarders had taken a leadership role in getting students involved in the local netball club and revitalising it, as the following parent and School Board of Management member explains:

The netball that's just this year especially has really come along, there's lots and lots of girls. One of them I think, young [Student] was probably the driving force behind that ... She's just been wonderful to this school.

Other students and community members spoke enthusiastically about the social events arranged by the netball club.

The contribution of the school to the netball and other clubs is the boarders and their enthusiasm. The student's leadership has enriched the netball club, but it is the school's policy of encouraging the boarders to play for local community teams rather than fielding its own teams that makes the contribution possible.

### *Youth interns*

The school has a Pastor who is responsible for overseeing the pastoral care of students and working as a bridge between families and the school. Tapping into a national Lutheran church youth internship program in schools, whereby young people straight out of school volunteer their services to the church for 12 months as part of their personal development, the Pastor attracted three youth interns (known as youth workers) to St Paul's College. The youth interns live in St Paul's' boarding house, receiving free board, and pocket money. Along with the Pastor, they 'work together as a team ... the youth workers are basically older brother and sister figures ...'. Positive outcomes for the school from the partnership between the school and the national Lutheran church through the youth intern program were clearly recognised within the school community:

Obviously they have a big influence in the boarding house, they have a big influence in the worship life of the College which is an integral part of the College life ... they play a very important role in terms of the spirit of the College.

Building on these positive outcomes, the Pastor has initiated a broader program of community youth work coordinated from St Paul's, but gradually spreading to neighbouring parishes, involving the formation of a partnership between the school, the church and local government:

We have [Name] working in the local parish as a youth worker, and so it's not just the Lutheran youth in the area but other youth are getting involved as well. The Henty Parish are looking at putting a youth worker in there, I'm already having discussions with leaders on the Council in Culcairn about getting a venue there that we can use to reach out to the youth in that area and putting a youth worker in there.

The broader program sprung from a concern in the local community about the disadvantages faced by its young people and the 'feeling that that is a neglected area', as well as from the Pastor's knowledge of the Lutheran Church's national training program for youth interns. This outward focus of the school is very much in keeping with the school ethos of a 'sharing, caring community' in that

We as a school have been central in the Riverina region, I guess we are taking up a role in terms of not just helping the youth of the College, but also the youth in the community.

The Pastor describes his vision for the project:

It's come from here, basically my vision which I've discussed with [Principal], I've discussed with local Pastors, I've discussed with local council people about having these links and networks for working with young people in the region. And it will be not controlled but I guess initiated and supported from here ... and I would be the mentor for the youth workers working in these different areas.

Although in the early stages of development at the time of our visit, the contribution to the well-being of the local community through the youth internship partnership is a resource for

its youth in terms of the time and skills of the youth workers, and the time and skills of the Pastor in his role as coordinator and mentor. The physical presence of the school's boarding house and the knowledge and skills of the St Paul's Pastor make the contribution feasible. The support of the Board of Management and Principal makes it possible to not only use school resources for the project but also to 'legitimate' the activities. The school is a conduit that brings benefits from the national Lutheran Church's intern-training program to the local community in and around Walla Walla.

### **Church community**

An interesting aspect of this case is the nature of leadership from the church community and the senior school staff as the school refocused and forged new relationships with its four communities. The church community is represented by the Board, and has ultimate responsibility for the school. The Church's major intervention in the school approximately three years earlier pointed the school in a new, outward looking direction. The Church-appointed Board sought out and appointed a new Principal who could bring about change; a new Principal who was committed to engaging the school with its multiple communities ensured that the school moved in this outward looking direction. The Pastor represents both the Church and the school and takes a leadership role in providing a bridge between the school and its multiple communities:

[One thing that] separates it [St Paul's] from others and even the other Christian schools in the area is the upfront Christian nature of our school. And that is actually the foundation of everything that we do.

The school makes a direct contribution to the church community by providing a means of involving the younger part of the local congregation in church community activities and in linking the district Lutheran community with the local community.

In recent years, some discord had developed within the local Lutheran Church community and relations between St Paul's and the local Parish had deteriorated. Attendance at the Zion Church in Walla Walla was falling. The church services were not attractive to the younger adults and children (including the boarders) in the congregation. The newly appointed school Pastor instigated a Sunday chapel service in the school which involved students in musical items and attracted families from the community as well as being attended by the boarders. While the move away from the local church was perceived negatively by some older members of the church community, the outcome for the younger members and ultimately the whole church community was positive, as a teacher explains:

Our students aren't going down to the local church. But that was probably never perceived to be positive with the church because many of the local church goers are very old and there was almost no interaction between the church population down there and our students which is I suppose totally opposite to this football, netball one where it is total involvement together ... Now that the students are doing the churching here at school on a Sunday evening ... they are getting involved in other church things that are a bit more youth orientated around the district and in the wider community.

The Pastor has set about building a positive relationship with pastors from neighbouring Parishes. There are regular meetings and sharing of services with each others' congregations; one of these pastors conducted the weekly religious assembly during our visit to the school. The school Pastor was actively involving other pastors in the community youth intern project described above, and linking other Parishes more closely to their local communities:

The Henty Parish are looking at putting a youth worker in there ... Jindera are looking at putting a youth worker in there ... It's the school, the church and the Council.

The Pastor's networking activities involve the school with other denominations. The Pastor goes out and works in other churches and other ministers come into the school to conduct

chapel services from time to time. The boarders attend church services in other denomination churches within a large radius. Their singing group is highly regarded and in demand from churches in the district.

The contributions of the school to the church community, through the efforts of the Pastor, are providing an attractive place for worship and acting to heal and smooth discord in the church community. The Pastor takes a leadership role in fostering interaction in the Lutheran and interdenominational church community and in linking the church and local communities. The Pastor position was made full time only several months before the interviews. This allocation of resources by the Board of Management permitted the Pastor to devote more time to the leadership activities, which contributed to the church community.

### **Family community**

A school's family community expects educational contributions from the school. Here, we report a social contribution that extends beyond children's education. A Debutante Ball was initiated by two senior girl boarders (the student who recruited for the netball club and a second student). They overcame initial scepticism and persuaded the P & F to organise the event as a major fund raising activity. A parent who is a member of the School Board of Management recalls:

By the time they finished their proposal I was totally convinced and actually volunteered to go on the committee ... it was for the girls who live a long way away, can't go home to do their Deb Ball ... They convinced the P & F.

The committee worked hard to organise the ball in a short time. The two students initiated the project, contributed to the preparation, and gained considerable satisfaction from their achievement.

Student One: The best bit I found out about it [was] that I could do my Deb [and] that I was one of the backbone, that I had so much to do with it ... Organising and preparation and stuff ... We had to put together a basic plan of what we wanted, explaining how many people we wanted.

Student Two: List of Debs, yeah. And the little things like flower arrangements, choosing the boys' suits ...

The Ball was financially and socially successful. It attracted over 300 people to a venue in Albury. The following parent and School Board of Management member sums up:

We figured we needed at least 10 [Debs] and we had 14 I think in the end, 15. So yeah it was a wonderful thing for the school, it really was ... they came from all parts and they booked out motels and all sorts of things.

The P & F was supportive and flexible in listening to the students' idea and being prepared to change from their usual fund raising activities of fetes and sock drives to something quite ambitious. As part of the formal school structure they exhibited an enabling leadership style that recognised the students' leadership in the project, and empowered and supported them in achieving their goal. Their goal, the Deb Ball, was a contribution to the family community who were brought together to see their children participate in an important country social rite they otherwise may have missed.

## **Discussion**

### **Nature and extent of the school's contribution to the community**

The previous sections illustrate a wide variety of contributions by St Paul's that extend beyond the education of the young people of the school's multiple communities. The economic contribution of the school to its local community must also be acknowledged. Part of the economic contribution stems from St Paul's being one of the two largest employers in Walla Walla and a big customer of local businesses, and part from its school farm enterprise.



For the formal school leaders, the school's economic contributions to its local and rural communities are inseparable from the school's status as a member of these communities, as the Chairman of the Board explains:

We are looked upon as another farmer in the area as much as we are educators because we run a very, very successful agricultural sector at the school as part of our niche market ... And that has spin offs to the community in that we would sell crops or whatever and of course money is spent locally and so forth. The more viable we are, the more viable the community is.

One of the more notable aspects of this case is that the school is a channel or conduit for contributions between its multiple communities, as in the youth intern example. International boarders sharing their culture with Walla Walla Primary School children is another example of the school as a conduit, as St Paul's family community makes a contribution to the local community. While we have noted that the multiple communities do overlap, St Paul's also introduces 'outsiders' from one community into the others and facilitates interactions between the non-overlapping sections. These outsiders are capable of making important contributions to the well-being of communities.

### **Leadership issues: Key players and their roles**

Two kinds of leaders are evident at St Paul's, formal leaders who hold positions in the structure of the school, such as the Principal, Chairman of the Board and P & F Executive members, and other, non-formal leaders.

#### *Formal leadership*

Analysis of the data uncovered many examples of leadership by formal leaders, however the examples that related directly to contributions to the community were almost exclusively about educational contributions. Many formal leaders' actions related *indirectly* to other contributions to the community, often by empowering the non-formal leaders. Three formal school leadership structures played a role in allowing non-formal leaders to develop initiatives and in supporting them as the initiatives were implemented. The structures are the School Board of Management, the Principal, and the Parents and Friends.

#### *Non-formal leadership*

All the contributions discussed in this case are made possible because of the physical and/or human resources of the school, but all were only operationalised through the actions of leaders. The contributions selected for this case study show leadership by people who were not formal leaders in the school (that is, they were not teachers in management positions, Board of Management or P & F committee members, or formal student leaders). These non-formal leaders included the two teaching staff in charge of the equine centre and school farm respectively, the Pastor, youth interns, and two senior students. Their initiatives all benefited the school *and* one or more of its multiple communities. For example, the equine centre and school farm benefited students' learning and the rural community, the school farm also helped the school financially through sponsorship and sales. The Pastor's initiatives with other churches and Sunday chapel services benefited the boarders, and the church community. The Deb Ball benefited the boarders and the family community, while the netball team was good for the boarders and the local community. The youth intern program has obvious benefits for the local community, but more subtle benefits for the school related to its perception by the local and church communities and hence the school's attractiveness to parents as a place to educate their children.

#### *Effective leadership for the school-community partnership: The link between formal and non-formal leaders*

Members of the church, family, local and rural communities have formal leadership roles on the Board of St Paul's. This reinforces the school's links to the multiple communities. The

Board replaced a larger school governing body following intervention by the Lutheran Church. The interim Board of a financier, an educator and a business person, was proactive and decisive in overhauling St Paul's aesthetically and administratively with input from the school's communities. A member of the P & F recalls:

We just got together and felt well this is our school and we need to do what we can for it and we had working bees and all sorts of things ... There was actually three people who came in ... the Lutheran District ... asked these three gentleman who had varying skills. It was really positive, the strength and support that came from within the community.

Once they had restructured the administration of the school, the interim Board looked for and found a Principal who shared and could implement its vision, which included a close relationship with the community. The Chairman of the Board attributes the successful turnaround of the school in large part to the Principal's skills as an educator and the way he manages relationships:

[Principal is] absolutely essential to the wellbeing of the College and the I suppose the go-between of the Board and what we required to deliver in the field to staff, to community as a whole ... Our success if you like in where we've got to today has been in a big part due to his attention to detail ... and his understanding of people ... He comes across as a very, very positive person ... he's very pro the College, very pro independent schooling, he oozes with enthusiasm, you can't help but be drawn into that enthusiasm, that excitement he portrays to the community as a whole, to parents ...

The Principal had a clearly defined and articulated vision for the school as part of the local and rural communities that mirrors but extends the Board's vision and philosophy:

The issue that we are looking at currently is that the school cannot stand alone by itself and insulated from the community. We, I have a very strong philosophical position that says that even though we are a private school we should be perceived and viewed as a community resource, and so looking at where we are heading philosophically and strategically for the school is that the agricultural, or the rural studies component, the VET component is very, very strong here and we've been pushing that.

The Principal set out to create a climate that encouraged and supported staff, students and the pastor in initiatives that matched the Board's and his own philosophy and visions. He acknowledged the success that followed from giving leaders plenty of freedom and scope to pursue their initiatives.

The vision of the two teachers, the pastor and the two students discussed in this case is consistent with the outward focus of the school's formal leadership structures. The students wanted to involve the family community, especially the more distant boarding family community, in the school through the Deb Ball. One of the students also involved the school in the local community by encouraging the boarders to play with the netball club. The Pastor's youth intern initiative put the school into contact with the church and the local communities.

The school philosophy and expressed policies encourage sharing of the school's facilities and interacting with its communities. The Principal plays a key role in setting and communicating that philosophy, however, a number of key staff share the philosophy, including some who were actively sharing with the community before the Principal came to the school, such as the Agriculture and Equine Studies teachers. The Agriculture teacher recalls:

In my earlier days here, nearly ten years ago now we ran a merino wether trial, two lots of trials over four years each which involved sheep coming in from community farms ... we used to have a field day for that each year and people would come in ... There's a lot [of interaction with the community], we'd like to get it higher again. And St Paul's being a really key, when people think of agricultural education and things that they think of St Paul's College and the whole agricultural education sphere.

The two teachers had visions of excellence for the equine centre and school farm that included being recognised for excellence as full members of the rural community, not just as an excellent rural school. Their vision for excellence, especially in 'niche markets', mirrored that of the formal school leaders. Students who had been at St Paul's through the period of rejuvenation were conscious of the new vision of excellence:

There's just more emphasis on doing something well, rather than just going along in school work, more encouragement and motivation to just strive for excellence in what you are doing.

The Deb Ball illustrates student leadership, yet interestingly was not volunteered as an example by any of the staff interviewees when asked about student leadership. It was volunteered as an example of student leadership or students initiating things, by parents and students, however. The supportive role of the P & F in agreeing to the Ball is highly consistent with the formal school leadership's behaviour in fostering other leadership initiatives, such as those of the Equine Studies and Agriculture teachers discussed here. However, the P & F acted independently. Even though one member of the Board of Management was also on the P & F, there was no evidence that the P & F consulted with the formal school leadership structure about whether or not to hold the Ball. This suggests that the school's leadership philosophy and style aligns with that of its parent community.

The Principal's community focus models a behaviour that values, cares for and takes pride in its multiple communities. The School Board's 'buy local' policy illustrates a faith in the quality of local products and services. The interaction with the Lutheran church community and other religious communities in the district illustrates that all these church communities are valued. The youth intern program demonstrates the leadership role that the school takes in the well-being of the district community, and models a caring behaviour that values all community members.

It is significant that actions that enabled others to take leadership roles occurred at the same time as the Board and the Principal were making centralised decisions about a range of matters including finances, staffing and the way classes were taught. The Board and the Principal believed that the school could only survive if tough decisions were made, and the staff and parents had little input into many decisions, for example teaching of composite year group classes. The seeming contradiction between the many examples of supportive and empowering leadership on one hand, and a centralised decision-making process on the other, can be partly explained by the alignment of the goals of the non-formal leaders and the goals of the formal leadership. While centralised decision making was chosen as a swift and effective way of bringing out change, formal leaders were willing to accept other actions that would achieve their visions. Although the support given by formal leaders to the two teachers, two students and the Pastor can partly be explained by the benefits to the school from these leaders' actions, perhaps the more significant reason is the match between the Board's and Principal's philosophy, vision and strategy for the future, and the initiatives of the non-formal leaders.

## **Other influencing factors**

### *Within the school and community*

Other influencing factors for the contributions relate to the Christian school ethos at St Paul's, a degree of continuity from the 'old' St Paul's to the new, rejuvenated school, and the match between the needs of the community and the contributions made by the school. The whole school philosophy and ethos is founded on sharing and caring, making sharing with its communities a logical and integral part of College life. A student summarises:

The logo of the school, playing with ideas, is 'the sharing, caring community' and people always have a joke about it, but it really is like it. The atmosphere at the school is so

awesome, [at] most high schools the bullying factor is always around but at our school it just gets knocked on the head as soon as it starts.

The Equine Studies and Agriculture teachers have both taught at the school for many years, and the equine centre and school farm are well-established components of St Paul's College. The two teachers were successfully working in and with the rural community before the restructuring and rejuvenation of the school occurred. They have provided continuity during a period of change for the school. They and the equine centre and school farm are links between the successes enjoyed by St Paul's before the decline in enrolments and the future success of the school being crafted by the new Board and Principal. It is worth noting that these two areas where there was greatest community interaction, even during the downturn, are the ones that are now seen as strengths of the school. The Equine Studies and Agriculture teachers have been leaders right through this difficult period. Continuity was also evident in the selection of the parent representative on the Board of Management. This person was a past student who had been a member of the old school governing body and was involved in the transition process.

The school farm and equine centre provide education and learning opportunities for adults that match the needs of three of its communities in particular—family, local and rural. The family community wants specialised education in equine and agricultural studies for its children. The rural community, especially the local rural community, needs education for its future workforce and leadership that models good practice on the school farm.

#### *Outside the control of the school and community*

This school is not subject to policy decisions by state education authorities in the same way as the schools in the other four case studies. It had used policies such as the introduction of VET in schools to its own and its communities' benefit, for example in accrediting the Horsemastership course with an RTO from Victoria rather than New South Wales, and introducing other VET courses such as hospitality to meet local employers' needs. The poor health of the rural economy has prevented some parents who are past students of St Paul's from sending their children to the school. There has been some discontent, with some parents believing the school should reduce fees to levels the Board says would not be viable. This creates tension, and potential contributions to the local and family communities are reduced.

### **For the future**

The leadership of the school staff in the school's multiple communities is the driving force for most of the contributions identified in the Walla Walla case study. Leadership that provides learning opportunities for others and encourages others to take on leadership tasks and roles was well received, for example, by local farmers who were members of the Rural Committee. There were instances, however, of leadership that was not successful in empowering others and passing on leadership responsibility. For example, there was some resentment when school staff took formal positions in local organisations.

The school was at a relatively early stage of its rejuvenation at the time of our visit. The formal leaders were very hands-on in their initial actions as they set about restructuring and giving a new direction to the school. However, the Board of Management had already handed many decisions to the school management team. The Principal is also giving other staff more leadership responsibilities as time goes on. It seems likely that continued devolution of leadership in the school and its multiple communities will see these communities reap many more benefits from their school in the coming years.

St Paul's College appears set on the path to a successful future as an integral part of its different communities. On our return visit in 2001, to present findings from the study at a community meeting, the school was in the process of implementing a number of new linkages

with each of its communities. For example, the school will further its contributions to the rural community by establishing an Angus stud and by working with TAFE in the delivery of another Wool Classing course at St Paul's. The local community is already benefiting from the regular use of school gymnasium facilities by local retired citizens, and is likely to benefit in the future from the school's plans to establish a first response, on-site medical facility at St Paul's. This would serve the needs of both school and community which, at present, do not have such facilities.

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